THE ULTIMATE MUSIC GUIDE

PAUL McCARTNEY

1962-2022
60 YEARS
IN THE STUDIO!

CLASSIC INTERVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF EVERY SOLO ALBUM

THE **SONGWRITER**
THE **SOLO ARTIST**
THE **FORMER BEATLE**

PAUL McCARTNEY

THE FULL STORY OF A LEGENDARY MUSICIAN

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

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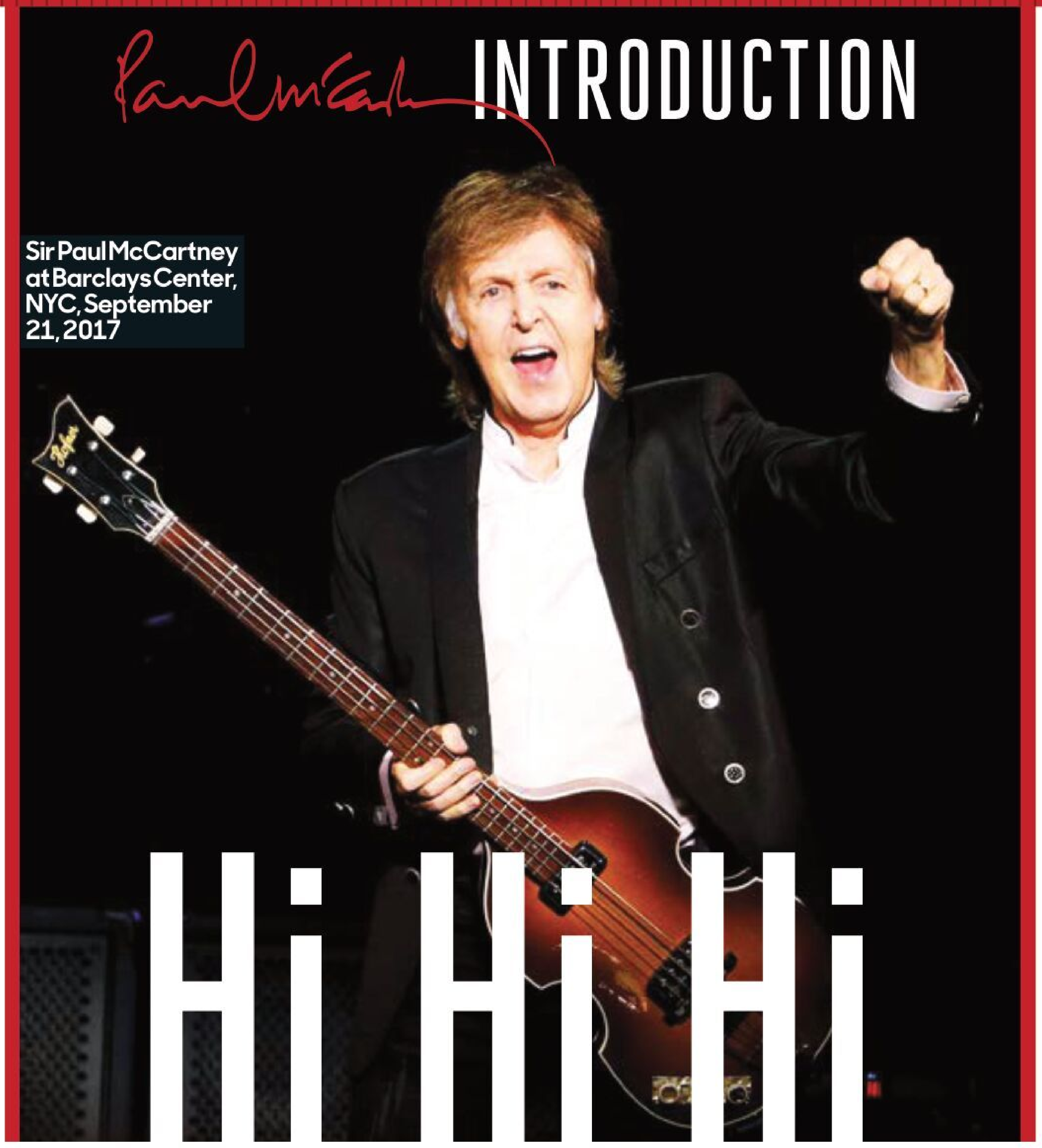
INTRODUCTION


Sir Paul McCartney at Barclays Center, NYC, September 21, 2017

Hi Hi Hi

AS ANYONE WHO has been to see him live in the last few years will know, Paul McCartney does a very good job indeed of managing his past and his present. Before he even left The Beatles he'd written a song implying how difficult it would be to live a life outside them – but in the room he makesit look pretty easy. Classic Beatles number follows huge-selling Wings song. Something from the new album dropped in there to change thepace. Even if you were compiling a mixtape you'd hesitate putting "Live And Let Die" before "Hey Jude" (too much? Too strong?), but McCartney, inevitably, pulls it off.

He has a huge wealth of music to draw on, and that's what we're celebrating in this overdue new deluxe edition of our *Ultimate Music Guide*. 2022 hasn't only been the year Paul celebrated his 80th birthday, it's also marked 60 years of top-flight recording, and here we look back on a substantial chunk of it. On the following pages, you'll find in-depth reviews of every Paul solo album from the experimental, intimate debut *McCartney* from 1970, all the way to his most recent rockdown, 2020's *McCartney III*.

It's been an incredible 52 years solo so far and the variety of material Paul has issued reflects the ebb and flow of some enduring themes. The interest in being in a band which might get back on the road, and back to basics. There's the engagement with contemporary recording trends and working with vogue producers. You will have enjoyed the respectful nods to his matchless past career, and to his departed colleagues. Then there's the joy of the off-piste self-titled albums, in which, released from his high expectations of himself, McCartney does very much his own thing.

What's just as gratifying is that when the time has been right, Paul has also taken the time to talk to us about what he's been doing. This doesn't generally mean a tour of the new album, but a generous and extended roam around the rolling estate of his entire career – and how being in The Beatles has informed who he is now. In his wide-reaching 2020 interview with *Uncut* included here, for example, Paul tells Michael Bonner about how John Lennon is never far from his thoughts when he's writing new songs. Specifically, thinking back on his guidance about when to persevere and when to rethink something completely.

"We collaborated for so long, I think, 'OK, what would he think of this?'" Paul remembered. "What would be say now?"

Meeting the other Beatles, he continues, gave him permission to find freedom through creativity. Surely these days, *Uncut* ventures, being Paul McCartney, he can do whatever he wants? Paul's answer is tellingly humble.

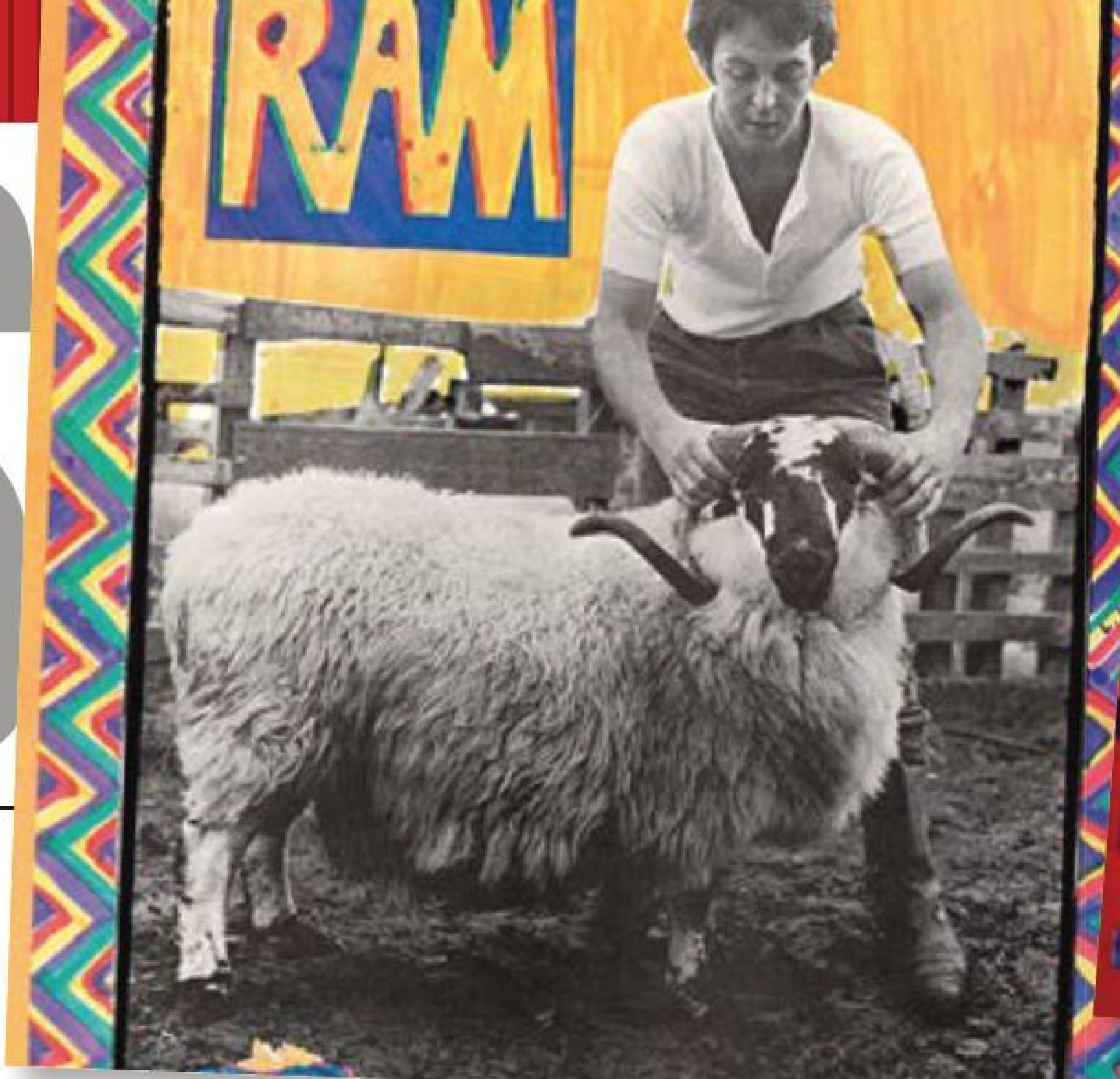
He laughed. "I wish I knew I was Paul McCartney, it would be so much easier... Look, you can achieve a lot of fame, but you're still the same person inside. Hopefully, you grow and learn things – but we're all a bit fragile inside. I don't think it's a bad thing. It's life, isn't it?"

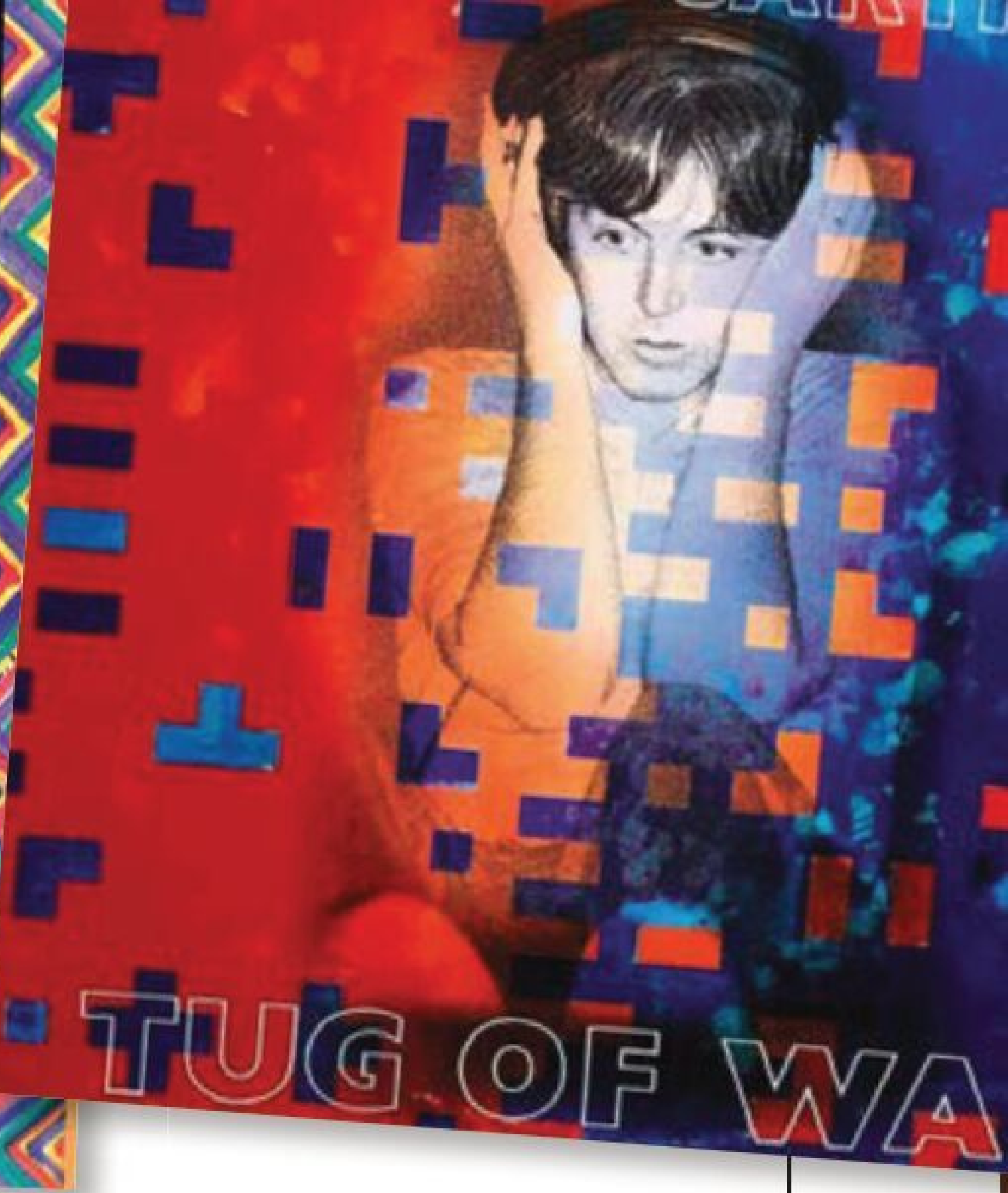
Enjoy the magazine.

John Robinson, Editor

TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES

CONTENTS





6 **"Let's just sod off to Scotland and do things ourselves…"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW The Beatles have fallen apart… McCartney begins his homebrewed solo career

10 McCARTNEY ALBUM REVIEW The experimental debut. Not *quite* the shape of things to come…

12 RAM ALBUM REVIEW Bucolic, questing, with an undercurrent of bile

14 **"It's impossible to follow The Beatles, as all bands ever since have found…"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW The story of Wings: muggings in Nigeria and drug busts in Japan…

20 WILD LIFE ALBUM REVIEW The band's debut is a brash bunch of first takes

22 **"I don't think we're quite as good as the Stones, yet"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW **1972:** Wings in the studio, as Macca opens up about Linda, Lennon and The Beatles

28 RED ROSE SPEEDWAY ALBUM REVIEW A confident step forward in troubled times

30 **"I've always seen myself as a hack…"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW Egg sandwiches, cheap plonk and a jovial chat

36 BAND ON THE RUN ALBUM REVIEW A world-conquering classic – the imperial phase begins

38 **"I'm not as in control as I look!"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW It's '74 and the "heavy trip of being Macca" kicks in

44 **"I like to have hits, definitely. That's what I'm making records for"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW The Wings frontman elaborates on his pursuit of soul and his love for Rupert Bear…

48 VENUS AND MARS ALBUM REVIEW Wings' fourth album defines Macca's rigorous aesthetic

50 **"It would ruin the whole Beatles thing for me…"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW No Fabs reunion, then, but a promising new album

54 WINGS AT THE SPEED OF SOUND ALBUM REVIEW "Silly Love Songs" and gazillions of sales

56 **"Christ, I'm so frigging ordinary, it's terrifying!"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW The "Mull Of Kintyre" single goes stratospheric; Paul, Linda and Denny Laine square up to a sceptical music press

60 LONDON TOWN ALBUM REVIEW An odyssey from the Virgin Islands to the Mull Of Kintyre

62 BACK TO THE EGG ALBUM REVIEW One last flight for Wings: "It was getting a bit boring"

64 McCARTNEY II ALBUM REVIEW Solo Macca is back, experimenting with new synths

66 TUG OF WAR ALBUM REVIEW A show of strength from a serious artist

68 PIPES OF PEACE ALBUM REVIEW The fractured flipside to *Tug Of War*… involves Ringo Starr and Michael Jackson!

70 GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD ST ALBUM REVIEW A big-screen midlife crisis… with a cameo from Giant Haystacks

72 PRESS TO PLAY ALBUM REVIEW A musical curiosity and commercial catastrophe!

74 **"I'm superstitious. I think that if you stop, you might never come back"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW 1987: 'Mr Normal' talks U2, punk and hip-hop

80 CHOBA B CCCP ALBUM REVIEW A revitalising set of rock'n'roll covers, on sale only back in the USSR

82 FLOWERS IN THE DIRT ALBUM REVIEW McCartney's eighth solo outing sees a creative collaboration with Elvis Costello

84 OFF THE GROUND ALBUM REVIEW The political album: Macca keeps moving on

86 FLAMING PIE ALBUM REVIEW An affectionate remembrance of Fab times past

88 RUN DEVIL RUN ALBUM REVIEW In mourning for Linda, McCartney gets back to his rock'n'roll roots

90 DRIVING RAIN ALBUM REVIEW Sir Paul's fresh start: adventures in LA and India, a change of bandmates and a brand new *"queen of my heart"*

92 CHAOS AND CREATION IN THE BACKYARD ALBUM REVIEW One of Macca's most vital albums in decades…

94 MEMORY ALMOST FULL ALBUM REVIEW …and another fine album, full of melodic riches

96 KISSES ON THE BOTTOM ALBUM REVIEW Macca tackles the Great American Songbook

98 NEW ALBUM REVIEW A defiant charge into his eighth decade

100 **"The Beatles? A great band while it lasted…"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW **2015:** McCartney on Lennon, among other things

108 EGYPT STATION ALBUM REVIEW In rude creative health, McCartney attempts to cover all bases

110 McCARTNEY III ALBUM REVIEW A playful and magnificent solo album

112 **"I wish I knew I was Paul McCartney. It would be so much easier…"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW **2021:** The star reveals the humility of the man behind the music legend

120 BOOKS REVIEW The books that Paul had a substantial hand in

122 **"He's meant so much, to so many people"** CLASSIC INTERVIEW As McCartney turns 80, *Uncut* gathers a stellar cast to pay tribute, including Nile Rodgers, Pete Thownshend and Paul Weller

134 TOP 40 SINGLES REVIEW McCartney's best 45s from "Another Day" to "Find My Way"

138 ELECTRONICA ALBUMS ALBUM REVIEW Covert adventures in electronic culture

140 CLASSICAL ALBUMS ALBUM REVIEW Symphonies, ballets and orchestral thrills

142 MISCELLANY Memorabilia, lost songs, lives and more

146 STOP ME… Strange meeting: in the corridors of Abbey Rd

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COMING UP
PAUL McCARTNEY
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Wings at Abbey Road, 1974: (l–r) Geoff Britton, Paul and Linda, Denny Laine, Jimmy McCulloch

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Man on the Tele: he played it left hand, but made it too far

© MARY McCARTNEY

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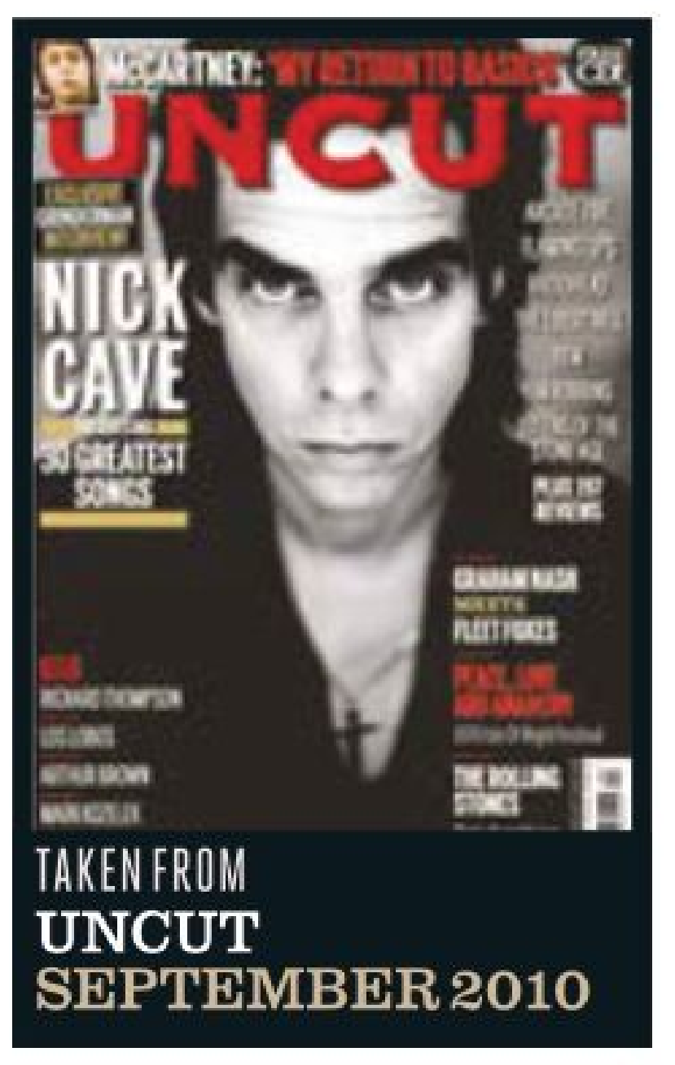
“Let’s just sod off to Scotland and do things ourselves…”

What happens next? The Beatles have fallen apart, and Paul McCartney has retreated to the West Highlands of Scotland. Here he works the land, dodges the long-distance brickbats from his old bandmates and embarks on his own, homebrewed solo career. “I needed to get back to ‘me’,” he tells ***DAVID CAVANAGH.*** “I’d got too far away from who I was.”



TAKEN FROM
UNCUT
SEPTEMBER 2010

ON OCTOBER 12, 1969, out of the blue, a Detroit radio station began announcing that Paul McCartney was dead. The shock claim was picked up by coast-to-coast newspapers and conspiracy theorists, who scoured Beatles lyrics and photographs for evidence. A theory was put together: McCartney had been killed in a road accident three years before (“*He blew his mind out in a car*”) and was now being impersonated by a lookalike. The bizarre ‘Paul Is Dead’ myth crossed the Atlantic, becoming a nightmare for Apple, whose Savile Row offices were besieged by hysterical callers. In his book, *The Longest Cocktail Party*, former Apple employee Richard DiLello called the story “the biggest pain in the ass of 1969”. The media clamoured for a comment from McCartney (or at least from the lookalike). But where was McCartney? Not at his home in Cavendish Avenue, St John’s Wood. Not in Savile Row. DiLello’s book records a conversation at Apple that autumn: “Haven’t seen Paul for a while, have you?” “No, I haven’t seen him for weeks now, and somehow I don’t think we’re going to be seeing much more of him, either.”

Faint whine of bagpipes. A West Highland mist clears to reveal a 27-year-old bassist chopping firewood, watched from a farmhouse window by his wife, Linda, holding their two-month-old baby. Paul McCartney was getting away from it all. “The Beatles had become a painful subject because of all the business shit,” he explains. “I’d been in Savile Row every day, trying to make sense of it, trying not to have Allen Klein as our manager, and being outvoted every time, three to one. Then the lightbulb went off in my head: ‘I won’t go in any more.’ Linda and I withdrew from London and went up to the farm and didn’t talk to anyone. It was like, ‘Let’s just sod off to Scotland and do things ourselves. I’ll buy the groceries. I’ll go into town in my Land Rover.’”

But it wasn’t strictly a holiday. McCartney was fighting his way through a drink problem and a bout of depression. The news was about to break that The Beatles were finished. And this time, the death was not a hoax.

> **“LINDA AND I WENT UP TO THE FARM AND DIDN'T TALK TO ANYONE”**

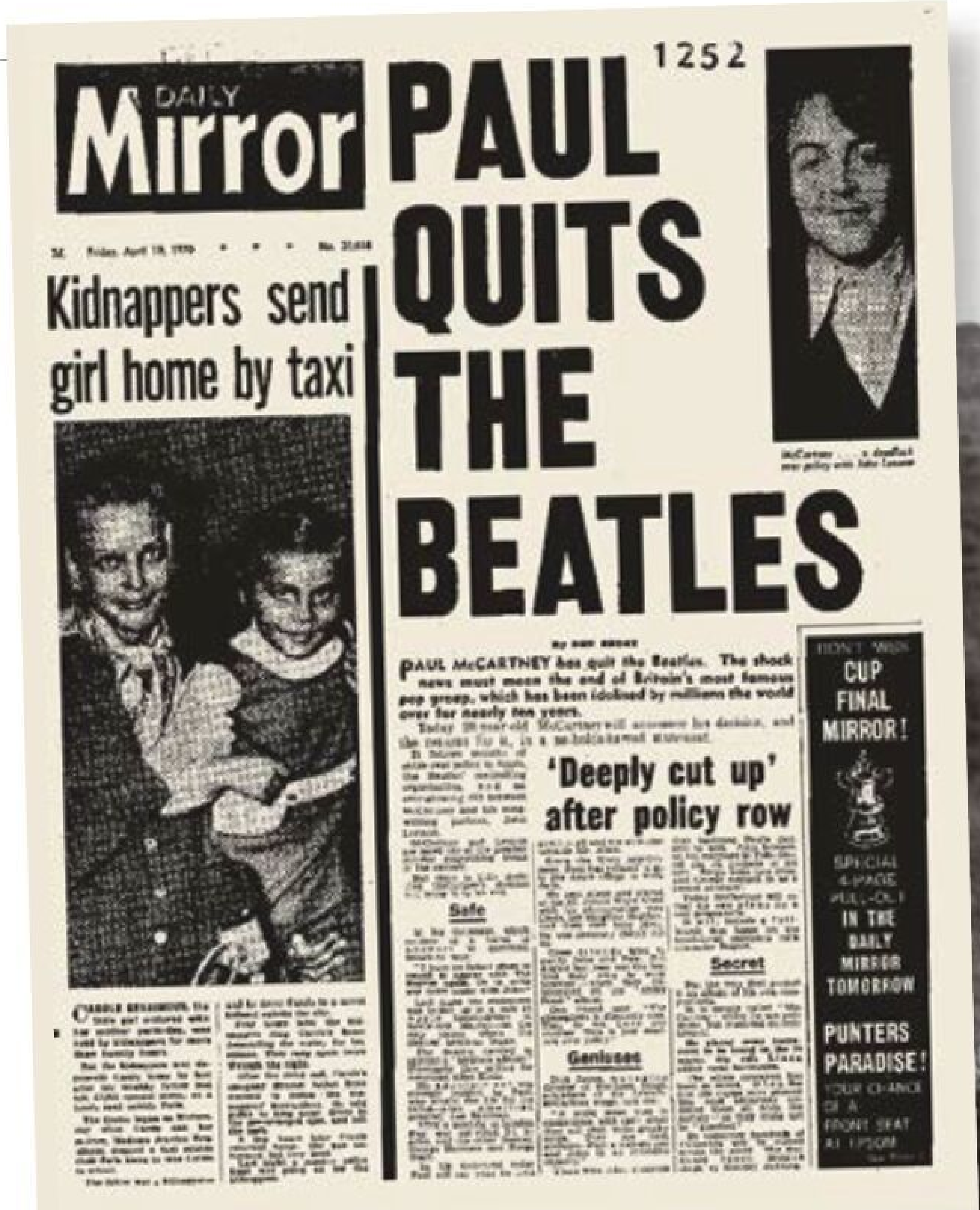
HIGH PARK FARM had been bought by McCartney in 1966, during the recording of *Revolver*. The three-room farmhouse – situated on the Argyll coast near the Mull Of Kintyre headland – was virtually derelict, but McCartney saw it as a potentially useful retreat from Beatlemania, and a convenient way to invest in property to soften the blow of the Wilson government’s top-earners’ tax rate. Following their marriage in March 1969, he and Linda renovated the farm and turned it into a haven, where they could live undisturbed, raise children and breathe fresh air.

“It was hippy times, and Linda and I were looking after ourselves, planting vegetables, farming,” McCartney recalls fondly. “I was mowing the fields, shearing the sheep and stuff. It was an attempt to return to basics. I felt like I needed to get back to ‘me’. I felt like I’d got too far away from who I was. And Linda was very helpful, very rooted, so it was really cool.”

Denny Seiwell, an American drummer who worked with McCartney from 1970 to 1973, remembers the farmhouse well. “It was two bedrooms and a kitchen. Cement floors, minimal furnishings and walls lined with natural pinewood planks. Off to the side was a little lean-to shed. Rude Studios, we called it. We

© PAUL MCCARTNEY PHOTOGRAPHER LINDA MCCARTNEY

Man on the run: McCartney with Mary and Heather at High Park Farm near Campbeltown, 1970



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DAILY Mirror

PAUL QUITS THE BEATLES

Kidnappers send girl home by taxi

PAUL McCARTNEY has quit the Beatles. The shock news must mean the end of Britain's most famous pop group, which has been idolised by millions the world over for nearly ten years.

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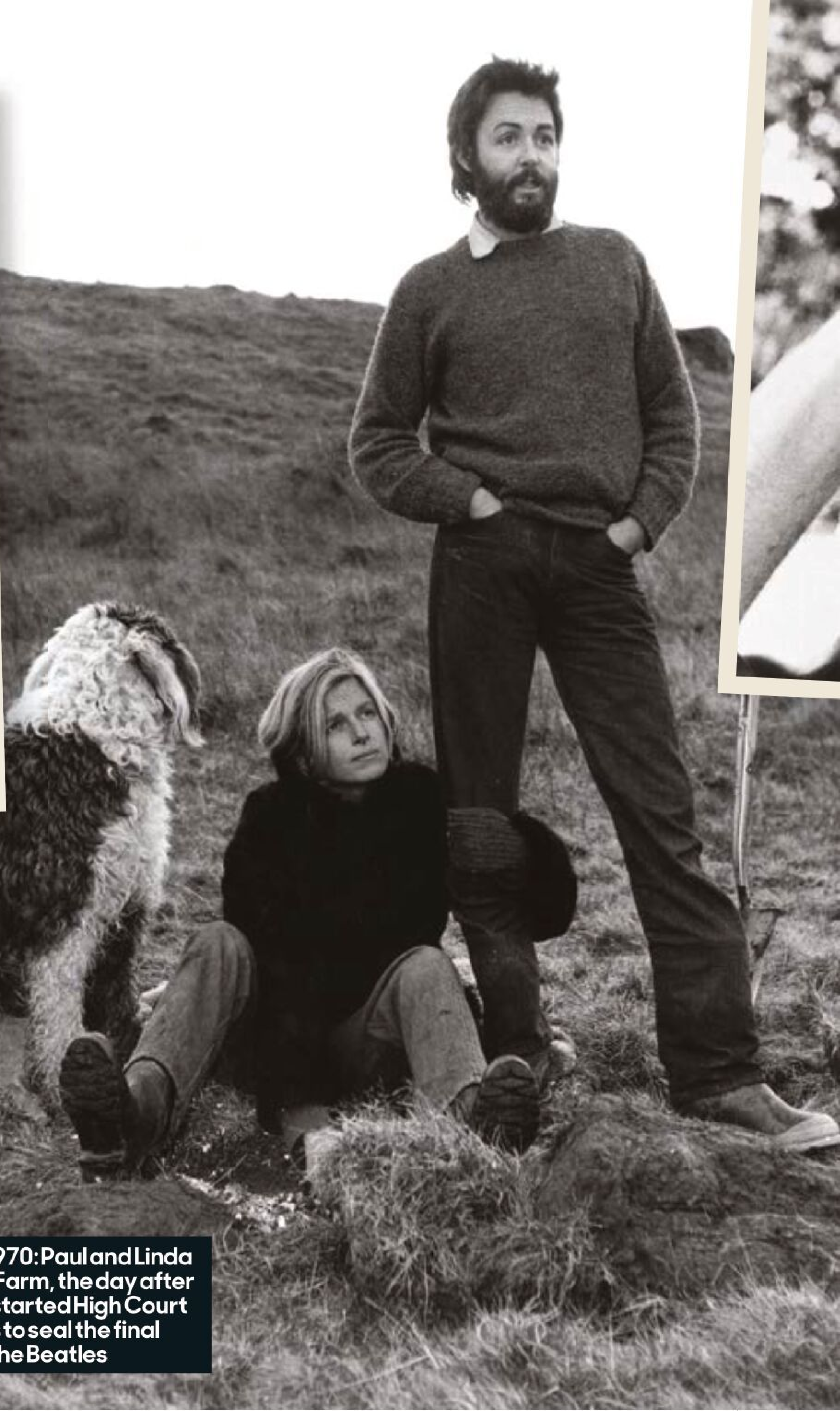
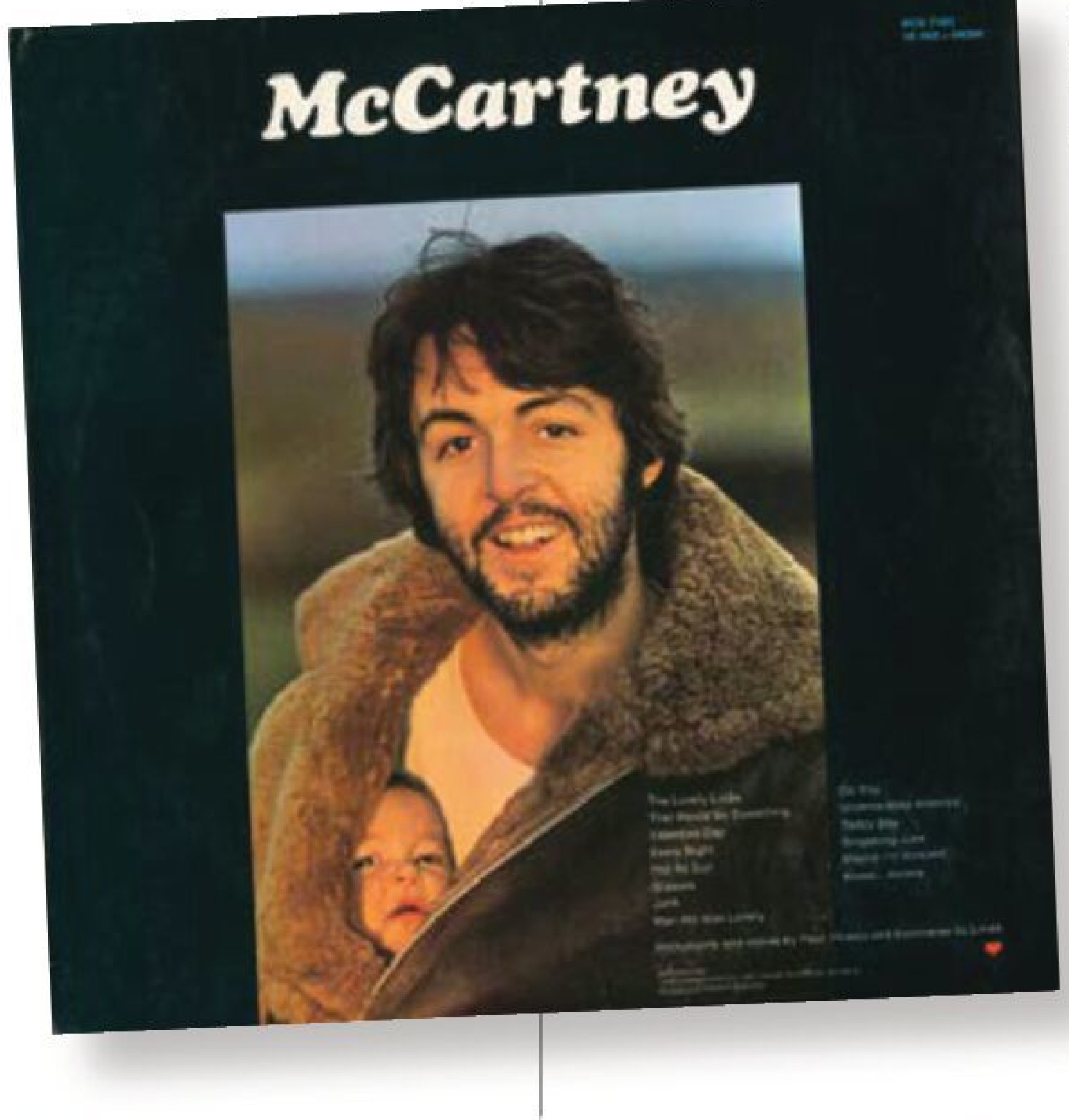


January 5, 1970: Paul and Linda at High Park Farm, the day after McCartney started High Court proceedings to seal the final breakup of The Beatles

would record demos there. But [*the farm*] was out in the middle of nowhere. It was in a 'bowl', so you could turn your head 360 degrees and all you saw were rolling hills and rocks. No trees or bushes. There was no road, either, just a lane that had been made by Jeeps going back and forth. A very peaceful part of the world."

In the dark, uncertain months of late 1969, however, McCartney's Kintyre sanctuary was merely a temporary safe house until the bomb exploded in the media. The truth was, The Beatles had effectively ended on September 20 – six days before the release of *Abbey Road* – when John Lennon informed McCartney and Klein in a meeting at Apple that he no longer considered himself a member of the band. The news had been suppressed while The Beatles negotiated an improved royalty rate with EMI and tried to decide what to do with the 'Get Back'/*Let It Be* project. McCartney, tracked down to his farm by a reporter from *Life* in early November, accidentally let the cat out of the bag ("The Beatle thing's over"), though the significance of the remark somehow slipped under the world's radar at the time.

As the '60s ended, McCartney had money, health, global fame, endless opportunities – and an uncharacteristic crisis of confidence. His first solo LP, *McCartney*, which he began recording on a Studer four-track when he and Linda returned to Cavendish Avenue in December, would peek its head over the parapet almost apologetically. Promo copies were accompanied by Macca-penned notes explaining the songs' provenance; his descriptions were casually, recklessly candid. There was "Valentine Day" ("made up as I went along"), "Man We Was Lonely" ("written in bed"), "Teddy Boy" ("recorded for the *Get Back* film, but later not used") and "Momma Miss America" ("ad-libbed with more concern for testing the machine than anything else"). He didn't exactly make them sound like a stack of classics composed for Frank Sinatra.



Unlike John & Yoko and George Harrison, McCartney had not participated in the record-anything-you-like madness at Apple during 1968-'9, and was starting with a clean slate. A multi-instrumentalist and fast worker, he could do what Lennon and Harrison couldn't: make an entire LP playing everything himself. With a bit of cute overdubbing – such as slapping his hands on a book, for percussion – he rattled through a few studio sessions in February 1970 at Abbey Road, and later Morgan in Willesden, checking in under the alias 'Billy Martin' to avoid prying eyes. Linda, ever present by his side, sang harmonies, notably on the album's standout ballad, "Maybe I'm Amazed". McCartney insists there was no grand strategy or motive. "I wanted to be with her, that's all," he says. "She'd actually sung on 'Let It Be', you know. There's a high harmony that she did. She'd come round the studio one night when I was putting harmonies on it, and there's a very high one I couldn't get."

Linda took charge of the album's artwork, which featured family photos of Paul with baby Mary (tucked into the fleecy interior of his jacket), and Paul carrying six-year-old Heather (Linda's daughter from her first marriage) in his arms. *McCartney* had domestic harmony engraved into its grooves like a Latin motto on a family coat of arms. Paulus Maximus Contentus Et Relaxius Cum Familio In Mulle Kintyribus. But his guileless collection of songs, fragments and instrumentals did not meet with much praise. Two typical reviews came from former colleagues. Harrison assessed it as "fair... quite good... a little disappointing." Lennon called it "rubbish", predicting that McCartney would "make a better one when he's frightened into it". In May and June, the LP spent three weeks at No 1 in America before being usurped by *Let It Be*.

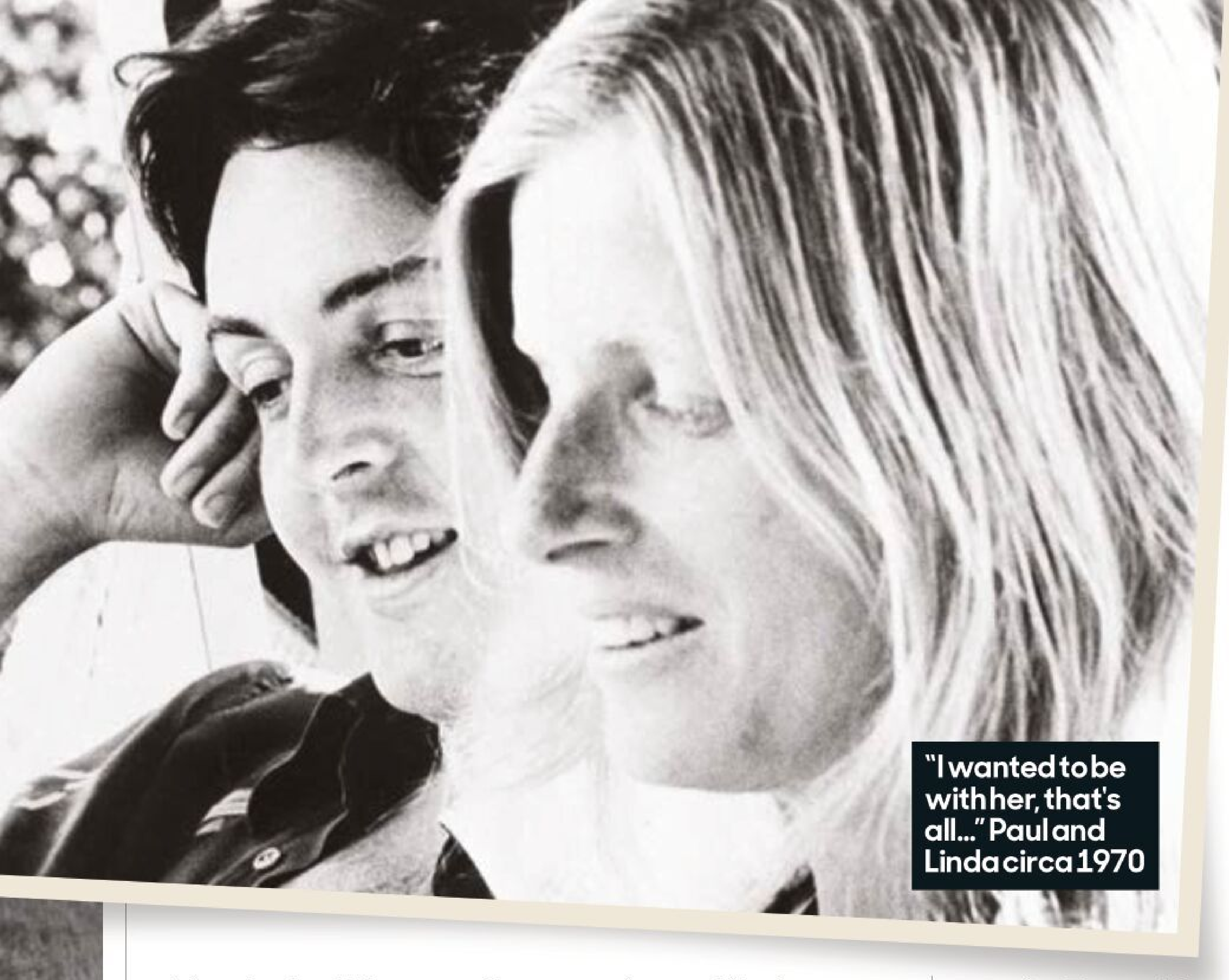
McCartney chose not to face the press. Back in November, *Life* had quoted him saying he'd "rather be a little less famous these days". If this was the plan, it backfired. The media had been given a McCartney Q&A with their review copies, relating to his current and future activities. The questions had been drawn up by Apple's press office. Fatefully, by the time McCartney filled in the answers, he was in a foul mood with the other Beatles, who had badgered him to delay his album's release to prevent it clashing with *Let It Be*. (He refused.) Ringo had been sent packing when he made an unwelcome visit to Cavendish Avenue. Now, in the Q&A, McCartney told it like it was – short, sharp and unforgettable. The comments were so explosive they made headline news around the world.

ON FRIDAY 10 April, the *Daily Mirror* printed a front-page scoop: "Paul Quits The Beatles". The story, by reporter Don Short, shrewdly read between the lines of the Q&A and quoted from the most damning passages. So, Paul, any plans for a new Beatles album or single? "No." Any chance of writing with Lennon again? "No." The reasons for the split? "Personal differences, business differences, musical differences, but most of all because I have a better time with my family." The *Mirror* presented this as conclusive proof, and the story set the following week's international news agenda.

McCartney became instantly unpopular. A million distraught fans condemned him as a cold-hearted executioner. Lennon resented him for breaking the pact of September 20. Harrison, no doubt with memories of the 'Get Back' fiasco, clearly felt it was good riddance. A CBS news team arrived at Apple and seismically contextualised The Beatles' split as "an event so momentous that historians may one day view it as a landmark in the decline of the British Empire". McCartney severed his ties. He took no part in Lennon or Harrison recording sessions and did not socialise with them. Even Starr, to whose *Sentimental Journey* LP he'd contributed an arrangement of "Stardust", admitted to having no rapport with him any more. *Melody Maker* published a letter that began: "Who does Paul McCartney think he is?" It was written by McCartney himself, exasperated at being portrayed as the villain.

Amid the recriminations and the turmoil, it was impossible to judge McCartney's music

EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES



"I wanted to be with her, that's all..." Paul and Linda circa 1970

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

objectively. Whatever he sang, it was likely to receive a mauling. His next album, *Ram*, would be dismissed with some of the most brutal putdowns in critical history ("monumentally irrelevant", "the nadir of the decomposition of '60s rock thus far"). Even faithful Ringo put the boot in. "I don't think there's one tune on *Ram*," he lamented. As for the handful of non-sadistic reviews, they would be far from flattering. With crushing economy, the *NME* described "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" – an ambitious medley of two songs in contrasting styles and tempos, linked by a segue, with symphonic orchestration – as "a novelty number".

THE RECORDING SESSIONS for *Ram* – which would be credited to 'Paul & Linda McCartney' – took place in the autumn of 1970. As a music-and-artwork package, *Ram* has an atmosphere that is bucolic, Scottish, earthy: Paul, on the front cover, holds a ram's head by the horns to make it stare into Linda's camera. But the album was recorded in a quite different environment, at Columbia Studios and A&R Studios on the taxi-deafened streets of Manhattan, with a few of the city's premier session musicians. One of them was guitarist David Spinozza. His recollections give the lie to the popular view at the time that McCartney had stopped caring about his music and was making wilfully sloppy records.

"Paul asked the Musicians' Union to recommend some local players, and I auditioned and got the call back," says Spinozza. "The sessions for *Ram* would begin early in the morning, at 9am. It surprised me how regimented they were. Very few rock'n'roll musicians get in at 9am. Paul and Linda would arrive together, with the kids, and you drank your cup of coffee and you rolled up your sleeves and played whatever song you were doing that day, sometimes for hours. Paul would always play guitar, never bass. It was an interesting way of working, with no bottom in the sound [*McCartney, since Beatles days, liked to record his bass parts at the end of a session*]. Paul had a great personality, very witty, but when he came in and we started working, it was 9 to 5. He was very serious about his music. He wasn't in New York to 'hang'. There was no indulging in drugs, no going to Studio 54, none of that."

Three drummers had been booked to audition, but as soon as McCartney heard jazz-trained Denny Seiwell, 27, he cancelled the other two. Seiwell relates: "He had a lot of music in him. He was going through the whole Beatles break-up and starting a new career. He had a lot of angst about him. He was still soaring on the creative heights of The Beatles' time, but he had all these fabulous new tunes. I sensed that he didn't want to talk about The Beatles. It wasn't a taboo subject, but no-one brought it up."

Spinozza: "He was a genius. Everything he sang, everything he played, was just so musical. The guy is made of music. Every idea, every little suggestion... he was really meticulous about capturing the song. He knew what he wanted to hear. When you listen to his records, there's a certain McCartney stamp – a certain way that he hears – and that's what he always goes for."

Seiwell: "It would be Paul, Dave Spinozza and I. Linda would remain in the control room, take some pictures, make tea. Mary was in a playpen, Heather was a little older. Paul would come in with a song in the morning, and sing it to us." The sessions lasted roughly six weeks, producing about 24 songs, some of which were held over for future albums. (During this period McCartney, with his daughters in mind, was also writing and recording material for a children's album about Rupert Bear.) Mostly, McCartney was laissez-faire in allowing Seiwell and Spinozza to come up with their own parts, but there were exceptions. For the first half of "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey", McCartney asked Seiwell to play "something melodic" – not easy for a drummer – which led Seiwell to devise a delicate pattern for tom-toms and hi-hat cymbals. The song's middle section has a flugelhorn solo, played by American jazz trumpeter Marvin Stamm (uncredited on the album), who recalls McCartney singing the melody to him in the studio. Stamm: "His dad was a trumpet player, I believe. Paul gave me the notes and asked me to imagine it coming out of an old-time 1930s radio, a very old-fashioned sound, almost like a paper and comb."

"THERE WERE SUPERGROUPS, WITH PEOPLE LIKE CLAPTON AND PAGE, BUT I DIDN'T FANCY THAT"

With Stamm's sublime cameo just one of its many delights, "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" was the major hit single to emerge from the *Ram* sessions. Based on a real-life uncle of McCartney's, the record was the sound of quintessential BBC England; it revelled in its Noël Coward mannerisms, Anglo-colloquialisms and spoof Scouse accents. It topped the American charts in 1971, tickling the mood of a fanbase that must have been baffled as well as amused by it. Seiwell: "What happened was, America was starved for Beatles music – and that song seemed to be picking up where they'd left off. You could turn on the radio, go to every station across the dial and it was getting played on all of them."

Stamm: "For about a year, I was the most famous unknown trumpeter in the world."

The other hit from the sessions was "Another Day" – not included on *Ram* – whose poignant glimpse of a woman awaiting her lover gave McCartney his first solo success in Britain, reaching No 2 behind T.Rex's "Hot Love". Ironically, the ultra-English "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" was never released as a single in Britain. It seems an insane oversight.

Ram was a transition for McCartney, but it was also a way forward. He had got the do-it-yourself bug out of his system with his first LP, and was now thinking about forming a group. "I'd heard Johnny Cash had come out again," he smiles, "and he'd put a band together and was gigging. I thought, well, that's kind of cool. He sort of came out of nowhere. And I thought, well, I do like playing... but how to do it? It took a few months, maybe a year. I thought: a supergroup? There were supergroups, then, with people like Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. But I didn't fancy that. So I had to have a think about what I did fancy."

IF *RAM* DIDN'T bring about a reversal of critical fortune for the beleaguered Macca (that wouldn't happen until 1973's *Band On The Run*), it at least added some spice to his deteriorating relationship with one old friend. Quick to join the chorus of its detractors was John Lennon. "The first time I heard it I thought, 'Fucking hell, it's awful'," Lennon chortled in the *NME*. "I think the other album he did was better in a way. At least there were some songs on it." Then Lennon listened to *Ram* a bit more closely. He started to obsess about the idea that some of it was aimed at him. "*You took your lucky break and broke it in two.*" "*Too many people preaching practices.*" "*I thought you was my friend, but you let me down.*" And as for "Dear Boy" ("*I guess you never knew, dear boy, that she was just the cutest thing around*"), was McCartney really daring to chastise Lennon for leaving Cynthia for Yoko? An incensed Lennon would retaliate ("How Do You Sleep?") on *Imagine*. The divorce, in other words, was still ongoing and still bitter.

On December 31, 1970, angered by the continued involvement of Allen Klein in The Beatles' affairs (and by the fact that the logo of Klein's company ABKCO had appeared on ads for his first solo album), McCartney filed suit against Lennon, Harrison and Starr to have their contractual relationship formally dissolved. The case began at the High Court in January 1971 and, in March, a judge ruled in McCartney's favour. In August he formed a new band, Wings – featuring the two Dennies (Seiwell and Laine) and Linda on keyboards – and launched them to the media later that year at the Empire Ballroom, Leicester Square. That night, teams of impeccably dressed ballroom dancers twirled and swirled in formation on the shiny dancefloor. But Wings would not have such a smooth ride.

RELEASE DATE
APRIL 17
1970

PAUL McCARTNEY

McCARTNEY

As The Beatles disintegrate, a long and winding solo career begins, stealthily.

BY JOHN ROBINSON

IN THE END, there was only one thing The Beatles couldn't do, and that was get back. John and Ringo knew it; George knew it. Even Philip Larkin knew it: "When you get to the top, there is nowhere to go but down," he wrote in 1983. "But The Beatles could not get down." The others looked up or on, embraced improvised and electronic music, acting and enlightenment. Conversely, Paul McCartney kept his thinking strictly inside the box, wanting The Beatles to revert to a paradigm that if anything pre-dated The Beatles: his father-in-law running the company; a "little band" going back on the road.

When he couldn't cajole The Beatles into getting back to basics, McCartney did so himself. *McCartney* doesn't precisely get a band on the road – that notion would have to wait until Wings. But in the meantime he got back to the land (a near-derelict farmhouse in Scotland) and began putting creative distance between himself and The Beatles, in a way simultaneously tentative and unexpectedly adventurous.

Their divorce was bitter and public, but in 1969-'70, Paul McCartney and John Lennon were creatively closer than they had been for three or four years, looking deep within themselves for their subjects. For Lennon, this meant introducing The Beatles to celebrity solipsism with "The Ballad Of John And Yoko" (a song recorded by he and Paul alone), documentary recordings like *Unfinished Music No 2: Life With The Lion*, and hacking chunks off his personality under the direction of Arthur Janov.

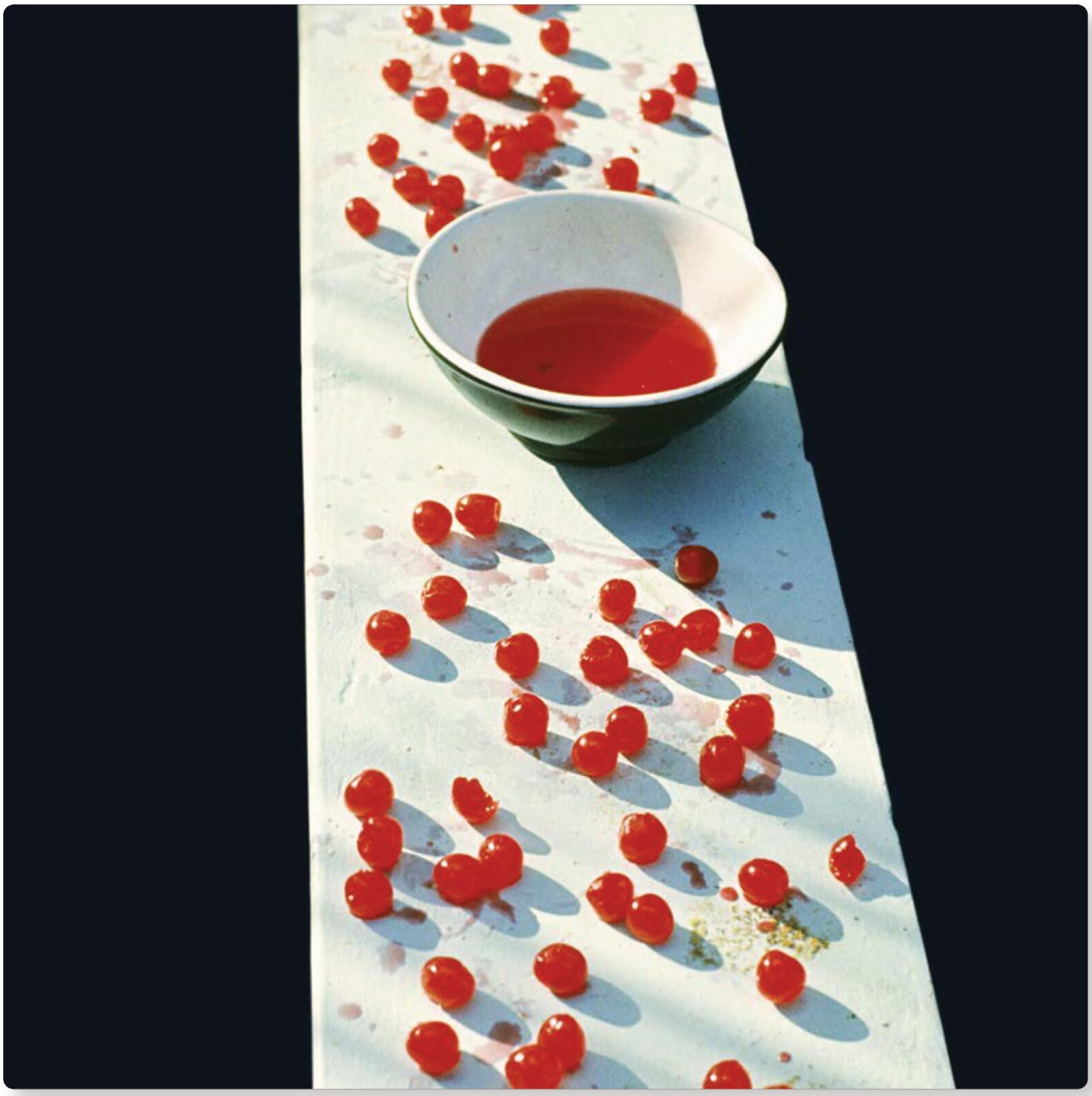
McCartney couldn't match Lennon's uniquely aggressive vulnerability, but his first solo album (a hermetic work in which a man in love, finding solace in his young family, plays every instrument) couldn't help but put his heart on his sleeve. The gatefold sleeve of the record, meanwhile, helps articulate just where that heart was at. Photographically, and musically, it's a family album: Linda grinning; larks on the beach; the newborn Mary inside her dad's leather jacket.

Out in the world, tunesmiths in a similar vein to McCartney were turning this kind of material into records like *Crosby, Stills & Nash* and *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (the record which would keep *McCartney* at No 2 on the UK album charts).

INEVITABLY, *McCARTNEY* FAILED TO COMPETE ON THE BEATLES' LEVEL...

Harmonising with other gentlemen on well-produced material was at that moment, however, precisely the kind of thing McCartney wanted to get away from. Instead, his debut takes a different path, a stealthy regime change, not a big fanfare.

Unpromoted except by a photocopied Q&A and sketchy track by track, it is determinedly low-key. "The Lovely Linda" opens the album, described by McCartney as "a trailer" for a song that would materialise more fully later (it never has). It dissolves into giggles. There's a collage of McCartney playing wine glasses (still a favourite "noodle" 40 years later when he did it for a BBC advert). This abuts a snippet of "Suicide", a number reportedly later demoed properly to be offered to Frank Sinatra. Similarly, several pieces were apparently improvised on the spot to test the new Studer four-track he kept at home in London. On Side Two, "Oo You" is a groovy blues riff like something off the *Blind Faith* album, just a riff, a beat and some improvised lyrics (*"Look like a woman!/Dress like a lady!"*). "Momma Miss America", which follows, was another track done at home, and progressively overdubbed. The music loses nothing for not being painstakingly sweated over, the blend of acoustic guitar and



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Most of the sounds, effects and ideas are sheer brilliance; much of the aura is of quiet songs on a hot summer night; and virtually all of the tracks reflect a kind of intangible roundness."

ALAN SMITH, NME, APRIL 18, 1970

"Using the full facilities of EMI's eight-track (Paul plays all the instruments throughout), he builds a typically exultant sound, topped off by stunning guitar and his best rock voice."

RICHARD WILLIAMS, MELODY MAKER, APRIL 18, 1970

mellow group playing all the more remarkable for being achieved without a group. Unassuming all, these are the McCartney tracks you might sample on your advert for distressed jeans, or put on a tape next to Beck or The Beta Band. The guitar breaks on "Kreen-Akore" (a sketchy number about native peoples being driven from their homes) even anticipate the stately drama you'll hear later on "Live And Let Die".

McCartney's judgment is not off. Interestingly, though, his ultimately fatal vacation from The Beatles seems to have taken him a little further out than he expected. Were *McCartney* just these home-taped voyages out into his own creativity – collages, songs that are nothing more than a groove and some animal noises – we'd be talking about it in the same breath as a cross between Skip Spence's *Oar* and *Paul's Boutique*, a place where the artist set himself free from old ways of doing things. However, *McCartney* isn't just his stab at unfinished music, it also addresses unfinished business, from which he couldn't completely cut himself adrift. *McCartney* was released in commercial competition with The Beatles, on their label, and also featured songs that were either composed for them or attempted by them in the studio. The great, anti-mercantile "Junk" (which also appears on Side Two in an instrumental, "singalong" version) was written in Rishikesh in 1968. "Teddy Boy", a bittersweet story song that sounds like Graham Nash covering Syd Barrett, escaped from *Abbey Road*. "Every Night", in mood simultaneously pissed and hungover, was attempted fruitlessly for a few minutes during the *Get Back* sessions.

Inevitably, *McCartney* failed to compete on The Beatles' level. Contemporary critics like Richard Williams (*Melody Maker*) and John Lennon (Beatles) drew similar conclusions. Namely that the tender love ballad "Maybe I'm Amazed" apart, this new album did not seem like a reflection of what McCartney was capable of, didn't feel customarily crafted and finished. In short, didn't feel like Paul McCartney at all.

Who was Paul McCartney? Behind the scenes, McCartney worried about that. As enjoyable as were his off-piste home studio sketches, he thought proper songs added authority to the project, feeling they gave it (as he said in 2011) "some validity" as an album. "Maybe I'm Amazed", the record's major new composition, was recorded at Abbey Road (while in a different studio there Phil Spector was working on salvaging *Let It Be* from the wreckage of *Get Back*). Oddly, at that point in 1970 a top-flight facility seems to have felt more like a comfort zone to McCartney than a home studio.

Whatever he hoped for, McCartney couldn't stop being a Beatle simply by absenting himself from the story. As much as his debut album is a break from the past, and an indication of his questing nature, it's also an indication of just how mindful he was of what people expected from him. Forty-four years on, engagement with those expectations is still the defining theme of his career.

TRACKMARKS McCARTNEY

1 The Lovely Linda ★★
2 That Would Be Something ★★★
3 Valentine Day ★★★
4 Every Night ★★★★★
5 Hot As Sun/Glasses ★★★
6 Junk ★★★★
7 Man We Was Lonely ★★★
8 Oo You ★★★
9 Momma Miss America ★★★
10 Teddy Boy ★★★★
11 Singalong Junk ★★★
12 Maybe I'm Amazed ★★★★★
13 Kreen-Akrore ★★★★

Label: Apple
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Cavendish Avenue, St John's Wood; Morgan Studios; Abbey Road
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, acoustic and electric guitar, bass, drums, organ, percussion, Mellotron, toy xylophone, effects, backing vocals), Linda McCartney (photographs and harmonies)
Highest chart position UK 2; US 1

RELEASE DATE
**MAY 17
1971**

PAUL & LINDA McCARTNEY

RAM

"Paul's granny music," snipes Lennon. But beneath the whimsy, a troubled Macca emerges.

BY NEIL SPENCER

EVEN THE EVER-EFFERVESCENT McCartney must have suspected he was facing a good hiding when he released *Ram*. John and George had recently unleashed tour-de-force debuts, the former's a stark, soul-searching affair with a zeitgeist tinge ("*the dream is over*"), the latter's a mammoth showcase laden with saved-up songs. Did Paul have anything similarly weighty in hand? Hardly. Though he had written a torrent of songs while on retreat in Scotland – some would take years to surface – there was nothing epochal or cosmic about his love croons, story ballads, '50s rockers and what John called "Paul's granny music". *Ram* was more or less a polished, studio version of the amiable home demos on *McCartney*.

A critical hailstorm duly arrived. "Monumentally irrelevant," boomed *Rolling Stone*'s Jon Landau. "Silly... laden down with caprices," sniped *The Village Voice*'s Robert Christgau. Paul's old muckers put in the boot. "Awful," sneered Lennon. "I don't think there's a tune on it," reckoned Ringo. The consensus was that Macca was little more than a lightweight charmer who had a way with a melody.

A stung McCartney could draw strength from a public that didn't care about his lack of heaviosity ('Heavy' – the word was everywhere). "Another Day", an upbeat sequel to "She's Leaving Home", had already become a worldwide chart-topper, and was quickly joined by *Ram*. Charm and melody clearly had their place, especially when delivered by one of pop's most agile voices.

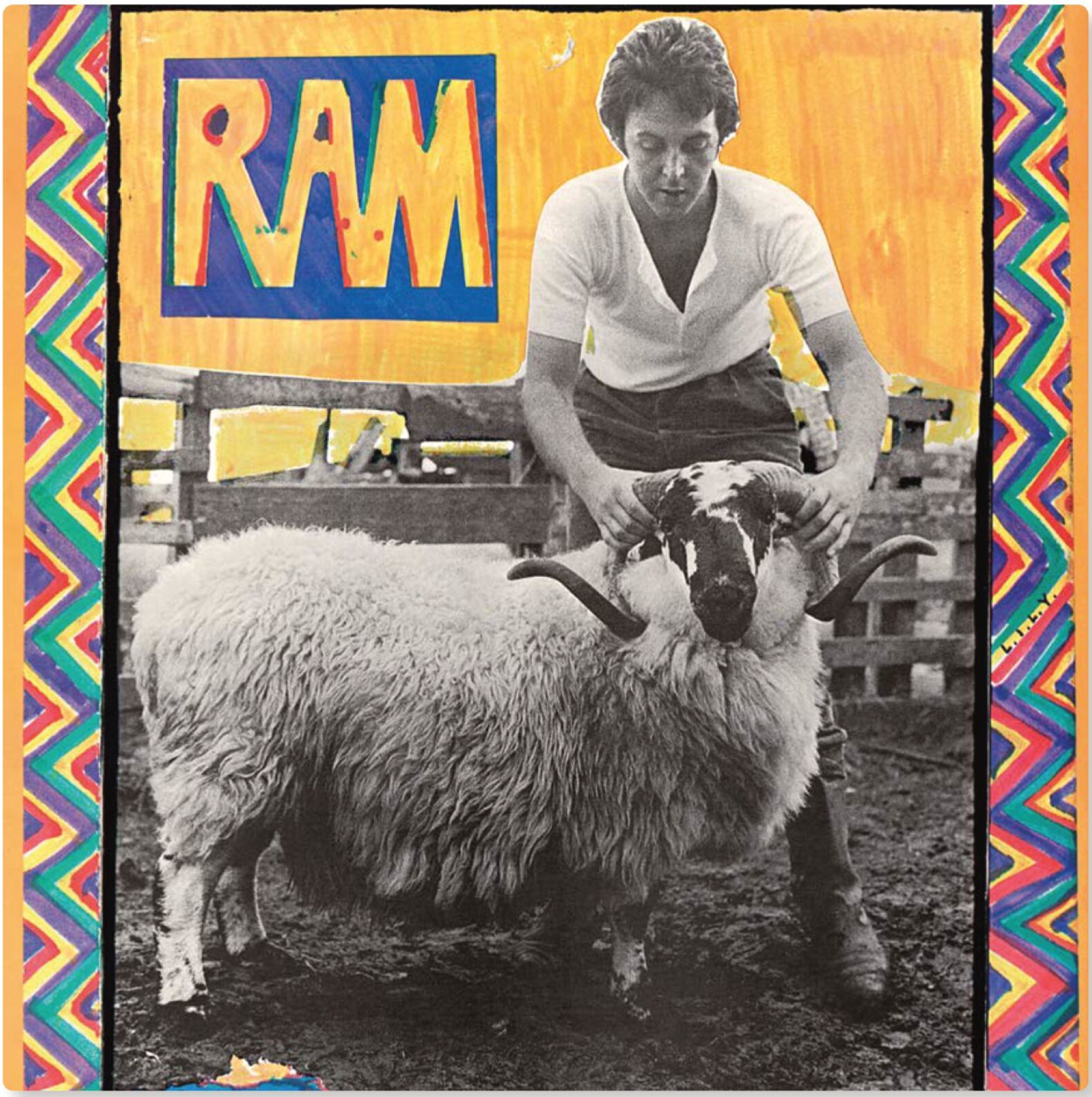
Time has been kinder to *Ram* than its initial reception. The album's lack of cultural resonance no longer seems the sin it did during a 1971 tortured by anti-Vietnam protest (CSNY's "Ohio" saw release the same month), rock star deaths and the deflation of hippy pipedreams. Its delights, whimsical though some are, still shine out.

Part of *Ram*'s problem was its projection of a bucolic idyll – the Linda cover shot of Paul manhandling a sheep, videos of the couple horseriding and paddling – a vision captured by the gentle acoustica of "Heart Of The Country" and the uke-driven "Ram On". This was 'getting it together in the country' writ large, with two kids in the yard and Martha, my dear, still lolloping beside them. The reality was slightly different. Linda would later reveal she had helped Paul through some dark, drink-sodden months as he dealt with the emotional and fiscal fall-out of The Beatles' break-up, meaning that beneath *Ram*'s cutesy surface runs an undercurrent of bile, just as its apparently throwaway songs are underpinned by finely honed arrangements.

Opener "Too Many People" is a case in point, its jaunty tune and mild protests masking a snipe at his fellow Fabs – "*You took your lucky break and broke it in two*" – though the song lacks real clout. Being overtly nasty, as Lennon would be on "How Do You Sleep", was not the 'nice' Beatle's style. The bluesy "3 Legs" is more obvious. "*I thought you was my friend but you let me down,*" growls Macca, while alleging that while his dog is burdened with having three legs, "*your dog he got none*". Blowing cool and hot, between stalking acoustic and electric outbursts, the number could easily have fitted on 'The White Album'.

> PART OF *RAM*'S PROBLEM WAS ITS PROJECTION OF A BUCOLIC IDYLL

Here, as elsewhere, Linda does service as choral counterpoint. Her vocal abilities would be the subject of tart remarks in coming years, but she serves admirably on *Ram*, the only album jointly ascribed to her and Paul.



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Certainly it would be true to say that it contains not one worthwhile or lasting piece of music. Almost all of the songs are clichés of things he's done before and in many cases the parodies of himself and others have become a reality – and the reality a parody. Suffice to say that *Ram* is the worst thing Paul McCartney has ever done."

ALAN SMITH, NME, MAY 22, 1971

The slight "Ram On" may only have been there to satisfy McCartney's taste for wordplay, Paul Ramon being his pseudonym from Silver Beetles days, with a sexual frisson to boot (sex features strongly in his early solo work). The 60-second reprise is no better. "Dear Boy", construed as a further slight by Lennon, was in reality aimed at Linda's former husband – "*You never know how much you missed*" – and comes in an impressive swirl of Beatlesque harmonies and a guitar riff borrowed from "Helter Skelter". Among the most devoted ears were surely those of Jeff Lynne; the number is a vital blueprint for ELO.

With "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" we're into the marshlands of Macca sentimentality. Adopting the medley style from *Abbey Road*, it likewise uses up scraps of half-completed, though less distinguished, songs. Veering between an oompah beat, send-ups of English aristocracy, a snatch of cod cowboy drawl and the catchy but meaningless "*hands across the water*" refrain, it's a well-stitched but vacuous piece that unaccountably became a US No 1 single. In the UK it stayed on the album.

Better is "Smile Away", a knowing pastiche of '50s rock'n'roll with terrific shooby-doo-wop backdrops, Little Richard whoops and an agile bassline to drive it – a contagious example of McCartney having fun. So too is "Monkberry Moon Delight", five minutes of a plain 2/4 rhythm overlaid by jangling guitars but given a fiery vocal performance, with McCartney growling and shrieking nonsense lyrics inspired by his daughters (for whom milk was 'monk'). Redolent of Edward Lear's rhymes – "*my hair is a tangled beretta*" is a fine example – the words remained a favourite with Paul, who included them in his 2001 *Blackbird Singing* poetry book, while the ferocity of his singing suggests something more in play than kids' entertainment. It isn't hard to imagine a charged-up Macca bellowing this on a windy Scottish night.

By contrast, the thinly disguised sexual celebration that's "Eat At Home" sounds like an early Beatles B-side, with a middle-eight from the Buddy Holly songbook. "Long Haired Lady" is a slump into the noodling MOR that would soon become familiar during the Wings years, with a chorus rather too akin to "Hey Jude" and, at six minutes, similarly overlong. Clearly intended as a climax to the album, "The Back Seat Of My Car", with its trumpets, strings and massed vocals, falls short, its melodic qualities undermined by an inconsequential lyric (more nookie, this time to Daddy's disapproval, as if Macca was 15, not 28) and some clumsy guitar – never mind John, Paul missed George!

Ram's breeziness was, in its way, McCartney's riposte to the earnest self-importance of his estranged fellow Beatles. Its place in his own heart was later shown by *Thrillington*, 1977's oddly appealing, full-length orchestral version. Ram on, indeed.

TRACKMARKS RAM

1 Too Many People ★★★
2 3 Legs ★★★★
3 Ram On ★★★
4 Dear Boy ★★★
5 Uncle Albert/ Admiral Halsey ★★
6 Smile Away ★★★★
7 Heart Of The Country ★★★
8 Monkberry Moon Delight ★★★★
9 Eat At Home ★★★
10 Long Haired Lady ★★★
11 Ram On ★★★
12 The Back Seat Of My Car ★★★

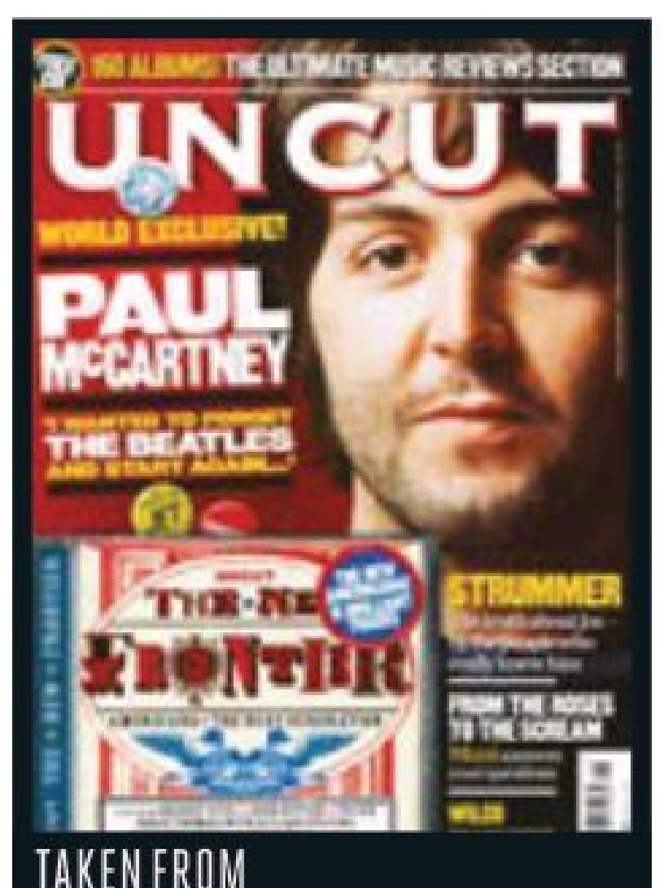
Label: Apple
Produced by: Paul and Linda McCartney
Recorded at: Columbia, New York City, A&R, New York City, Sound Recording, Los Angeles
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, guitar, bass, ukulele, piano), Linda McCartney (vocals), Heather McCartney (vocals), Denny Seiwell (drums), David Spinozza (guitar), Hugh McCracken (guitar), Marvin Stamm (trumpet)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 2

"It's impossible to follow The Beatles, as all bands ever since have found..."

The strange story of Wings, or how Paul McCartney gave up sheep-shearing, got back in a van with his wife and a new bunch of miscreants, and energetically returned to his roots. From muggings in Nigeria to drug busts in Japan, *DAVID CAVANAGH* pieces together the truth about Macca's *second* great band. "It was," he says, "like leaving a very posh job and going to work on the streets."

Band with no name: early rehearsals in Scotland for debut album *Wild Life* in 1971: (l-r) Denny Laine, Denny Seiwell, Linda and Paul McCartney

© PAUL MCCARTNEY / PHOTOGRAPHER LINDA MCCARTNEY



TAKEN FROM
UNCUT
JUNE 2007

MARCH 15, 2007. Soho Square is bathed in buoyant sunshine as a few lunchtime stragglers drain their lattes and wander back to work. Between azure sky and coffee aroma, the only affront to the senses comes from workmen entrenched behind fencing, cacophonously digging up the road. "Replacing London's Victorian Water Mains", read the signs around the square. Sir Paul McCartney emerges from his second-floor office overlooking the road works and steps into a cluttered reception area. He's wearing a white shirt and grey trousers with pin-sharp creases. His hair is a discreet older gentleman's brown – his stylist would know the exact shade – and his manner is quizzical. He squints at his young publicist, pretending not to recognise him. Then he turns to me, gesturing towards his office with a thumb. "Are you comin' in here, then?"

RUDE
STUDIO

BRIGHT AND AIRY, the office contains an executive desk on one side, and some chairs and a chaise longue on the other. There's a table where an interviewer from *Uncut* can rest his coffee-mug and tape recorder. A piece of abstract expressionism by Willem de Kooning adorns the far wall. In a corner stands a beautifully preserved Wurlitzer jukebox, all sleek contours and strawberry-pineapple fluorescence. The workmen's drilling intrudes through an open window. McCartney presses a button and Presley's "Hound Dog" drowns it out.

At this moment, his estranged wife, Heather Mills, is somewhere across London, engaged in a hectic itinerary of TV and radio appearances that will dominate tomorrow's newspapers. Teams of highly trained showbiz correspondents will dissect her cryptic claims regarding the McCartney divorce. ("There are huge powers. I don't have that powerful system he has. There is a huge agenda about trying to destroy me.") As if oblivious to her activities, McCartney seems presidentially calm this afternoon. But not even presidents can stop the passing of time. He'll be 65 on June 18. You're struck by the facial gauntness and husky cracks in his voice.

We're here to talk about Wings, the band he led from ignominy to record-breaking glory in the 1970s with his intrepid but musically L-plated wife Linda. However, he also slips in a mention of an imminent new album, his follow-up to the well-received *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard* (2005).

"I bought a mandolin," he explains. "It isn't tuned like a guitar, so I didn't know my way around it. But the feeling of picking my way through, and finding chords, was magic. It was like I was 17 again. I remembered – this is what it's all about. It was like me and John [Lennon] learning piano. You play, and then you hit a wrong note, and you go [*in amazement, delight*] 'Ooohh!' And you write a whole song on that chord. The excitement of getting the mandolin, finding new chords – that's really lifted me, that has. That's the opening track to my new album."

Great. Can you tell me the title?

"I don't think so, actually," he hesitates. "I'm never sure with that... I want to tell you the title, definitely, but..."

Days later it's announced that the album signals the end of McCartney's 45-year association with EMI, and will instead be sold in 13,500 Starbucks stores as part of a revolutionary deal signed with the planet's foremost coffee retailer. "It's a new world now, and people are thinking of new ways to reach the people," McCartney's statement runs. One commentator estimates the album could reach 44 million customers a week. Not bad for a mandolin player with only limited experience.

WINGS: THE VERY name carries a pejorative echo in the universal mind. Wings: that FM radio colossus. A precarious rope-ladder from *Abbey Road* to "Ebony And Ivory". Wings: a song about a peninsula that stayed at No 1 for a million years. But the Wings story epitomised McCartney in action – his bloody-mindedness, his inner battles between cliché and genius, his loyalty to Linda Mac, his irrepressible gung-ho spirit. And he needed every ounce of that. Wings: poor saps with the impossible job of following The Beatles.

"I knew it was impossible," says McCartney straight away. He holds up his hands. "Come on. It's the impossibility of the universe to follow The Beatles, as all bands ever since have found. Even bands who have almost been successful at it."

But if Wings are Wings, McCartney is McCartney, a pan-global superstar and billionaire who doesn't strictly enjoy having his judgment questioned. There's a physical emphasis to him in person that doesn't come over on TV, and certain remarks have an unmistakable edge. He dismisses the rock critics ("They come and go") who sneered at every Wings LP except *Band On The Run*. There are no olive branches for Beatles fans who found Wings maddeningly inconsistent ("That's too bad, isn't it? It's my life"). To McCartney, Wings always made perfect sense.

"It's like with 'Mary Had A Little Lamb'," he scoffs, referring to a much-maligned 1972 single. "People said, 'Oh, he only put that record out because [*"Give Ireland Back To The Irish"*] was banned.' It wasn't like that. I had a baby. We used to sing the song around the house and I thought it sounded catchy. I probably should have thought, 'Yes, but is this the record that you want in your portfolio right now? Is it "the move"?' But I don't think in terms of 'moves'."

Wings were born out of a farmhouse, a marriage, "almost a nervous breakdown" and a pair of sketchy, convalescent solo albums. In 1969 McCartney had grown weary of driving from his St John's Wood house to Savile Row every day to have the same circular argument with The Beatles about whether the notorious Allen Klein should be their manager, and what percentage of their income he should get. "The others were saying, 'He's great.' And I was saying, 'No, he isn't! He's not great at all, and 20 per cent is too much for someone to take off The Beatles. This is not The Bottles. It's The Beatles, and it's a fucking great group, and someone should take 10 per cent, if that.'"

Exhausted and defeated, McCartney withdrew from London for a simpler life – with his American wife Linda and their daughters – at his farmhouse in Argyllshire, near the Mull Of Kintyre. "It was hippy times," he smiles, "and Linda and I were looking after ourselves, planting vegetables, farming. I was mowing the fields, shearing the sheep and stuff. It was an attempt to return to basics. I felt like I needed to get back to 'me'. I'd got way too far away from who I was."

By mid-1970, with McCartney vilified nationally as The Beatles' executioner, Linda was nursing him through a year-long depression on the farm. She was both rock and collaborator. Having sung a harmony on "Let It Be" (uncredited), she now added her folksy voice to some of Paul's best early solo work ("Another Day", "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey"), as well as some of his worst. His commercial stock remained high – *McCartney* topped album charts in America, *Ram* in Britain – but neither critics nor old friends had kind words for the homespun, hit-or-miss ditties he now favoured. "I don't think there's one tune on *Ram*," lamented Ringo Starr in 1971.

In bed one night, Paul asked Linda a question. Did she fancy being in a band?

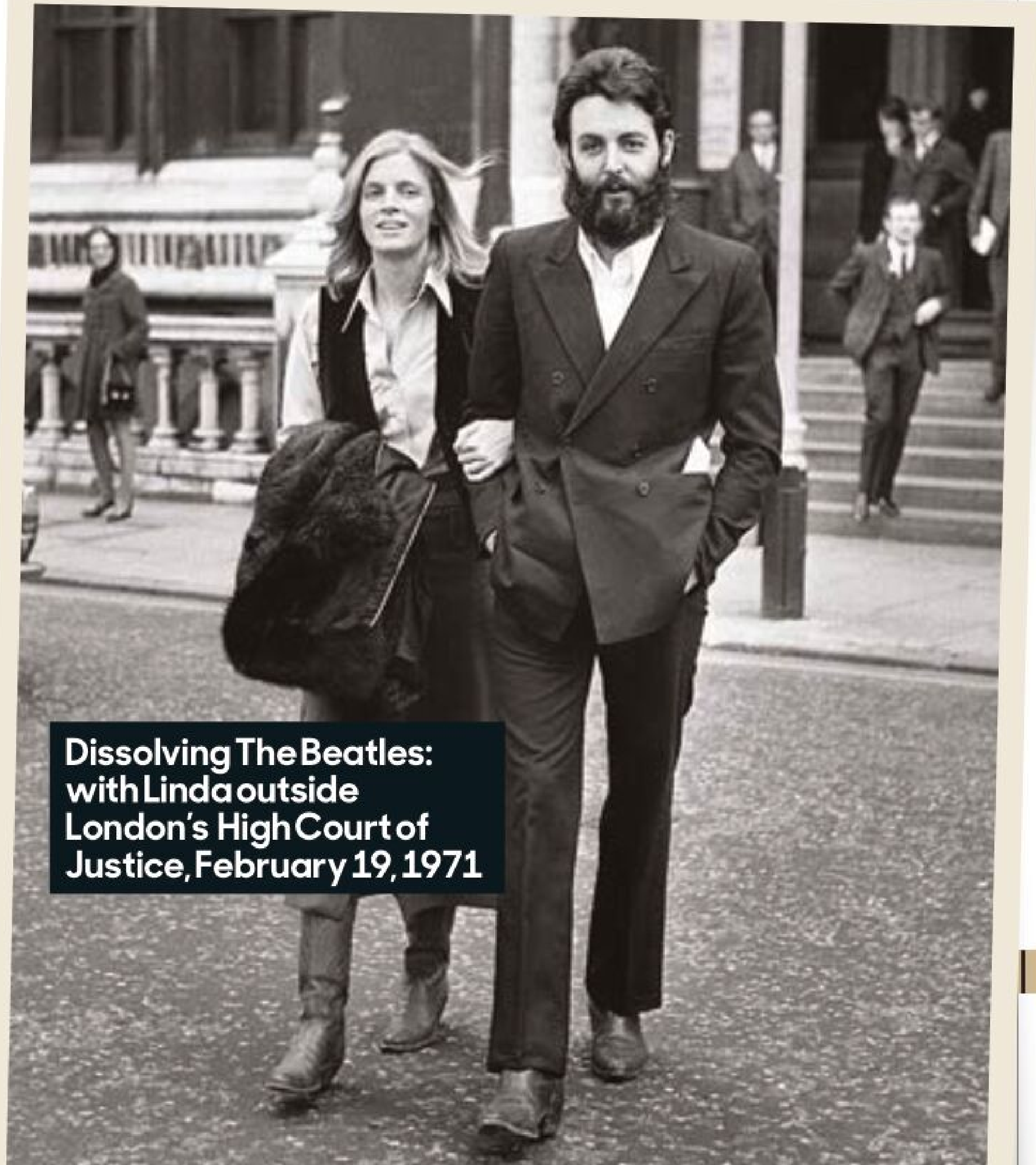
"She said, 'Ooh I don't know, really,'" he recalls, adopting a Mavis Riley quaver. "I said to her, 'You have to imagine there's a curtain there, and we're behind it, and if it opens up... would you like that? We'd be the band and there'd be an audience out there. Could you get into that?' She said, 'Yeah... I think so.' We took it as lightly as that. Mick Jagger said [*scornfully*] 'Why did he get his old lady in the band?' I wanted to be with her, that's all."

On November 8, 1971, the McCartneys launched their new band, Wings, at the Empire Ballroom, Leicester Square. Completing the quartet's lineup were New York drummer Denny Seiwell and ex-Moody Blues singer/guitarist Denny Laine. The Empire, with its roots in Victorian music hall and Lumière Brothers moving pictures, provided a suitably historic setting for Wings' inauguration.

But when their first album, *Wild Life*, appeared in December, it was patently substandard. Denny Seiwell tells *Uncut* that five of the eight songs were first takes. The rock papers savaged it. "This is not even acceptable pop music," wrote one reviewer. McCartney was undaunted. Wings were going on the road.

BRITAIN WAS HIT by a power crisis in February 1972. Affecting heat, lighting and amplification, it caused numerous gigs to be cancelled, and there were fears for musicians' livelihoods if the situation worsened. In this context, Wings debuted on February 9. They had a new member, Henry McCullough (lead guitar), but no manager or booking agent. They travelled in two vans – musicians, wives, children, dogs, roadies. On the M1, seeing signs for Nottingham, McCullough suggested they try Nottingham University.

"How do you 'do a band' was the question," explains McCartney on the subject of Wings' low-key, morale-boosting University Tour. "You could do the supergroup thing like Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton. Or you could return to your roots – and that's what I was doing. I wanted to get away from being huge in The Beatles, and


Dissolving The Beatles: with Linda outside London's High Court of Justice, February 19, 1971

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

The magic bus – top speed 35mph: Wings prepare to tour Europe, July 1972

BENTLEY ARCHIVE/POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

experience being at the bottom again. It was like leaving a very posh job and going to work on the streets.”

The scenario went like this. Wings pull into a uni campus. Their roadies ask the students’ union if they’d like a band to play. “No thanks.” “It’s Paul McCartney.” “Whaat?” Student comes out to the van, sees McCartney, grins in disbelief. It is agreed Wings will play for 50p on-the-door, tonight or tomorrow, whichever is convenient, mate. Wings look for somewhere to spend the night. “We didn’t stay in many hotels,” Henry McCullough laughs. “It was mostly Mrs Murphy’s bed-and-breakfast. But it was fantastic, like a little English magical mystery tour. Only a man like McCartney could have done it.”

“We were having a great laugh,” McCartney enthuses. “This is what I thought it was going to be about. Camaraderie. A baptism of fire. Learning to play together, getting a chemistry. We only had a few numbers. We had to repeat some of them, pretending they were requests.”

Wings released their first single, “Give Ireland Back To The Irish”, that month. A horrified McCartney’s response to Bloody Sunday (January 30), when 13 civil rights protestors in Derry were shot dead by British soldiers, the song proved bitterly controversial. EMI reluctantly sanctioned its release, but as Northern Ireland teetered on the brink, the single was given no exposure whatsoever. Radio 1’s chart show wouldn’t even mention its title. McCartney was unrepentant. “My family comes from Ireland,” he reasons today. “Half of Liverpool comes from Ireland. That was the shocking thing. We were fighting us. And we’d killed them, very visibly, on the news.”

Wings lay low. The University Tour had created an ‘issue’ in the band, one that successive lineups would all have to face. Linda McCartney was a novice-standard prodder of a keyboard, and tended to sing waywardly onstage. As everyone from band members to road crew gritted their teeth, the stoical Linda became the butt of countless jokes during Wings’ lifetime. Henry McCullough remembers losing his temper and telling McCartney to hire a proper piano player. He was told to sit down and shut up.

That summer, with child-friendly single “Mary Had A Little Lamb” gambolling around the Top 30, Wings upgraded from a van to a bus, and toured Europe. Denny Seiwell: “It was an open-top London double-decker bus. They’d painted it bright colours and fitted it with mattresses on the top deck for sunbathing. It only went 35mph, that was the problem. In Germany we were late and they sent five BMWs to meet us on the motorway.”

Incredibly, Wings’ third single, “Hi Hi Hi”, received another Radio 1 ban – this time for sexual innuendo. However, an incident on the European tour would have much more serious repercussions than any BBC embargo. In Gothenburg, Sweden, the McCartneys and Seiwell were arrested and fined for possessing marijuana. Media reports of the bust triggered a second bust at the McCartneys’ farm by Scottish police. Paul now found he was repeatedly denied a US visa. The drug convictions also kept him out of Japan, one of rock’s most lucrative markets.

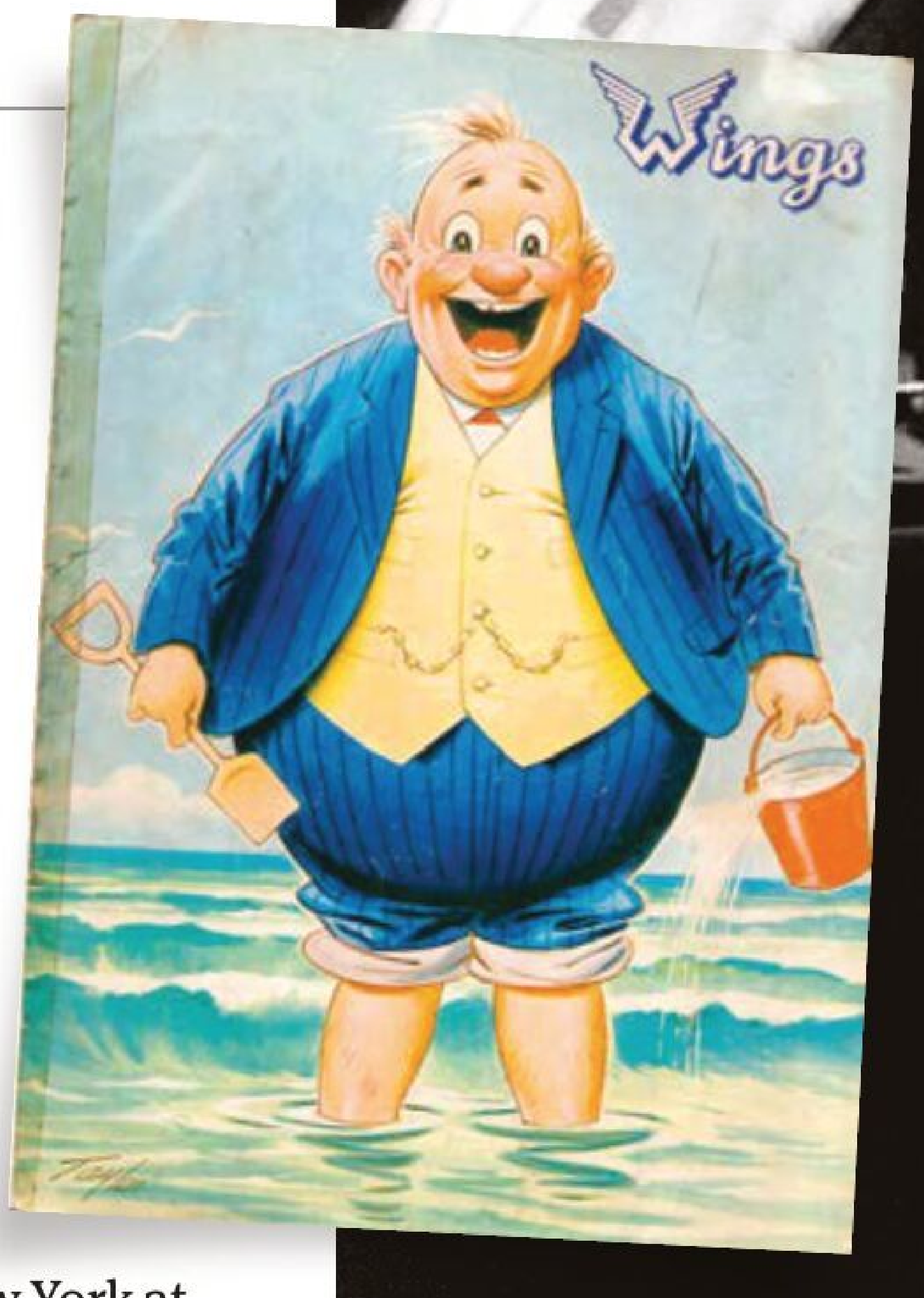
Seiwell: “That wasn’t just a menial fine paid in Gothenburg. That cost him *a lot* of money.”

Wings
Mary Had a Little Lamb

“I JUST WANTED TO EXPERIENCE BEING AT THE BOTTOM AGAIN”
PAUL McCARTNEY

PAUL AND LINDA McCartney are sauntering down a dark, unlit road one evening in September 1973, tape recorders and cameras in hand, the red Lagos mud underfoot. Paul, who has chosen Nigeria from a list of EMI’s studios round the world, has multiple duties on his plate – including playing lead guitar and drums on the new album. McCullough and Seiwell, unhappy that their retainers did not increase in line with recent chart success (“My Love”, “Live And Let Die”), have quit – Seiwell by telephone, hours before the Lagos flight – reducing Wings to an overstretched trio. A car passes the McCartneys on the road, and stops. An African man gets out. Paul tells Linda he thinks they’re being offered a lift. In his Soho Square office 34 years later, McCartney’s face creases up. He is relishing this story. It has already become the interview’s centrepiece anecdote. “They told us at the studio not to go walking late at night, because there was crime and stuff. We just went [*sarcastically*] ‘Yeah, sure!’ We were hippies. We thought we were immortal.”

The McCartneys have now caught up with the car. Paul gives the man a friendly nod.



RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

“I said, ‘You know what, this is so nice of you – but it’s a beautiful evening and we don’t want a lift.’ I’m bundling him back into the car. ‘Come on, now. Get in the car. Get back in that bloody car.’ I’m doing the Liverpool thing. ‘You’re not giving us a lift. Go on, mate, off you go!’”

He decides to illustrate what he means. Getting up from his chaise longue, he grabs me by the shoulders and tries to push me off my chair. He’s quite a lot stronger than you think.

“So then the car stopped again. Only this time it stopped a bit more sharply – and suddenly all the doors flew open, bam bam bam, and five or six of them jumped out. The little one had a knife. Now the penny drops, finally.”

The McCartneys were stripped of their pricey cameras and tape recorders, and returned to their rented house deeply shaken. Next day, recounting the story at the studio, they were told they would probably have been killed if they’d been a black couple. The robbers had left them alive as they wouldn’t expect white people to identify them. “Looking back on it, it was funny,” McCartney says, shaking his head helplessly. “I’ve got this – I think it’s basically stupidity. I must admit there’s an element of stupidity there. When I look at these things after, I think, ‘What are you on?’ But I see it as a sort of enthusiastic innocence. It’s enthusiasm to me. Yeah, let’s do this. Don’t worry about it. Everything’ll be great!”

Following the mugging, Wings’ Nigerian adventure turned thoroughly sour. Local musicians came to the studio to intimidate them. Paul suffered a bronchial condition that made him fear he was having a heart attack. Yet the driven McCartney slaved over *Band On The Run* in Nigeria and London like no Wings project before, and the result was a career landmark. The songs were saturated in infectious hooks. The arrangements were witty and inspired.

Band On The Run followed its patchy predecessor, *Red Rose Speedway*, to No 1 in America, and became Britain’s best-selling album of 1974. The unqualified triumph did wonders for McCartney’s self-confidence. He was back. He’d made a classic. Even John Lennon said so. And as McCartney now overtook Lennon to become the most successful and critically acclaimed ex-Beatle (ironically the two men had a rapprochement in New York at this time), the image of Wings changed totally. Once a good-time band for blokes and birds, they increasingly catered for a more exclusive, high-end clientele. Dustin Hoffman hung out with them. *The Magnificent Seven*’s James Coburn was among the startled celebrities on the amusing sleeve of *Band On The Run*. Wings joined the jet set. By 1976, once McCartney had finally been granted a US visa, there would be $80,000 end-of-tour parties in Hollywood mansions, attended by A-listers Warren Beatty and Tony Curtis. Wings, the band that had played Little Richard covers for 50p on-the-door at Nottingham University, were now grossing $5 million for seven weeks’ work.

THE MID-’70S WERE Wings’ commercial heyday. The albums *Venus And Mars* (1975) and *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* (1976), while sorely flawed, dovetailed consummately with the baby boomers’ insatiable appetite for easy-going arena-rock (Eagles, Peter Frampton, Steve Miller) both at home and abroad. Back to full strength after the addition of Jimmy McCulloch (guitar) and Joe English (drums), Wings racked up a fifth consecutive US No 1 album in 1977 (with the triple-live *Wings Over America*), having obliterated the indoor world audience record (67,100) in Seattle on the tour in question.

Of course, by late 1977 in Britain, there were new forces to compete with. McCartney, never so foolish as to try to identify publicly with the punk scene, instead trusted his judgment and released a misty-eyed waltz, composed in tribute to the area of Scotland where he lived. While the Sex Pistols sneered at stupid old EMI on an album released that month, McCartney and his record

WHO’S WHO IN WINGS

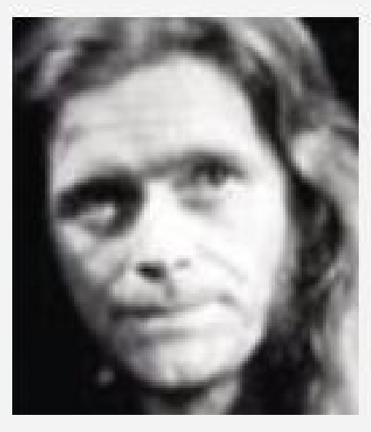
A rundown on the band's changing lineup…

PAUL McCARTNEY
(1971-’81)
Bass guitar, keyboards and vocals. The former Beatle is determined to forge a distinct 1970s identity for himself. He is vindicated by Wings’ phenomenal commercial success, particularly in America.

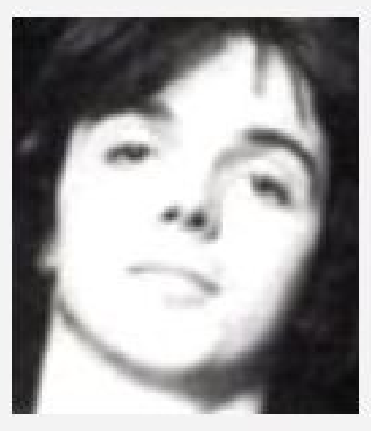
LINDA McCARTNEY
(1971-’81)
Keyboards, backing vocals. Wife. Perennially viewed as a ‘fifth wheel’ by sceptical media. Died from breast cancer in 1998.

DENNY LAINE
(1971-’81)
Guitar, vocals. Midlands veteran, ex-Moody Blues. Dogged utility player. Now estranged from McCartney.

DENNY SEIWELL
(1971-’73)
Drums. Quit on the eve of recording *Band On The Run*, later playing with Donovan, Joe Cocker and others. Runs drum clinics in the United States.

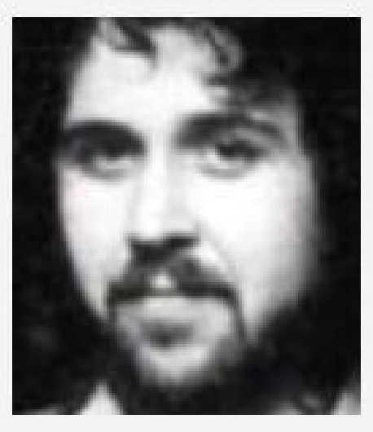


HENRY McCULLOUGH
(1972-’73)
Lead guitar. Played the timeless solo on “My Love”. Quit two weeks before Seiwell. He died in June 2016 after a long illness.



JIMMY McCULLOCH
(1974-’77)
Lead guitar. Volatile Glaswegian who caused postponement of 1976 US tour after breaking finger in fight with David Cassidy. Died of OD in 1979.

GEOFF BRITTON
(1974-’75)
Drums. Karate black belt. Quit after clashes with McCulloch. Wings’ shortest-lasting member (approximately six months). Now lives in Spain.



JOE ENGLISH
(1975-’77)
Drums. Joined during *Venus And Mars* sessions. After leaving Wings, recorded Christian music. Current whereabouts unknown.

STEVE HOLLEY
(1978-’81)
Drums. Ex-Kiki Dee Band. Credited on Wings’ records as Steve Holly (without an “e”). Recently toured with Ian Hunter.

LAURENCE JUBER
(1978-’81)
Guitar. Former studio session musician. Lives in New York, where he performs and records solo.

Arriving at the Tarrant County Convention Hall, Fort Worth, Texas, on the first night of their Wings Over America Tour, May 3, 1976

company savoured their colossal international hit. Statistically outrageous, "Mull Of Kintyre" sold over two million in Britain alone.

"We were expecting it to be a flop," McCartney protests. "We thought we should really be putting out something thrashy, fast and loud. But it had occurred to me that there weren't any new Scottish songs. I like the pipes, you know. The skin-tingling, bloodcurdling thing. So we released it, thinking 'Nah… it's not the time for it.' But I remember ringing here [*his office*] and the guy said, 'It's selling 30,000 a day.' As a joke I said, 'Don't get back to me until it's selling 100,000 a day.' And the next week, it was."

He laughs, and goes on to tell a story – which may or may not be true – about him and Linda being stuck in traffic in the West End when "Mull Of Kintyre" was enjoying one of its nine weeks at No 1. Through the car window, they espied a large gang of punks loitering on the pavement.

"They looked pretty menacing," he says, rolling his shoulders like Del-Boy in *Only Fools And Horses*, "and there were a lot of them. I said to Linda, 'Keep your head down. Get the sunshields [*in the car*] down.' And of course one of them recognises me. [*Cockney accent*] 'Oi, Paul! Awright, Paul!' I thought, oh no… The guy's going like this [*signalling for Macca to wind down the window*]. So I put the window down a little bit. And he says: 'You know that "Mull Of Kintyre"? It's faaking great!' I thought, 'Now that is cool. Punks like it.'"

With its buttery production and soft-rock electric pianos, Wings' 1978 album, *London Town*, doubtless kept those punks thrilled. It had partly been recorded on a yacht moored in the Virgin Islands, where Wings relaxed with cordon bleu dinners and water-skiing sessions. So it was a surprise when McCartney unveiled a new Wings lineup that year, featuring two newcomers who looked like members of Blondie. Producer Chris Thomas, fresh from *Never Mind The Bollocks*, was brought in, and McCartney promised a "raw" Wings sound.

Guitarist Laurence Juber remembers the band listening to "a lot of reggae, new wave, whatever was in the air". Things looked promising. But *Back To The Egg* (1979) saw McCartney's innate conservatism scupper the experiment. He just couldn't help inviting some decidedly pre-punk acquaintances – Dave Gilmour, Pete Townshend, John Bonham, Ronnie Lane – to participate in an Abbey Road supergroup (the Rockestra) on a couple of gratuitous blowouts.

Stung by the album's rejection – it yielded no UK hits – McCartney focused his mind on the upcoming world tour. After the UK, Wings' next stop was Japan, where the authorities had finally relented and allowed McCartney permission to play 11 sell-out concerts. He and Linda flew into Tokyo's Narita Airport on January 16, 1980. Just prior, Wings had dispensed with their usual sound equipment team, sending schedules awry. "The crazy thing is that I hadn't allowed enough time to rehearse," McCartney says. "Normally I'm very good about that. But we were only going to have a week to put the whole Tokyo show together. We were up against it. It was like fate… closing us down."

The McCartneys approached airport customs: surely a formality. TV crews and fans crowded around. But McCartney had forgotten – or perhaps was unaware – that 229g (about half a pound) of top-quality marijuana was packed in his luggage. He leans forward. "I've asked myself, 'Why was that pot in the case? So… obviously. And so much of it.' There was not one hint of discretion. If you see the film of the arrest, the guy is embarrassed to find it. He almost puts it back and closes the suitcase."

Juber: "I was standing next to him. I looked at the case. Then at Paul's face. He'd turned white."

McCartney was escorted to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Office, where he spent 10 days in a cell, subsisting on bread and coffee. He was denied a guitar. Meanwhile, his lawyers tried legal and diplomatic routes to free him. "It was such a different world," he says softly. "It was like going to another planet. They would say, highly curious, 'You are MBE?' And I'd say 'Yeah', hoping that would carry weight. And it sort of did. They were a bit deferential. Then they said, even more curious, 'You live at Queen's Palace?' I said, 'Well, no, not actually… Well, yes, quite near.' I was hoping they might let me off if I lived near the Queen's house. 'You smoke marijuana?' 'Hardly ever.' They said, 'Make you hear music better?' I thought, God, I wonder if that's a trap."

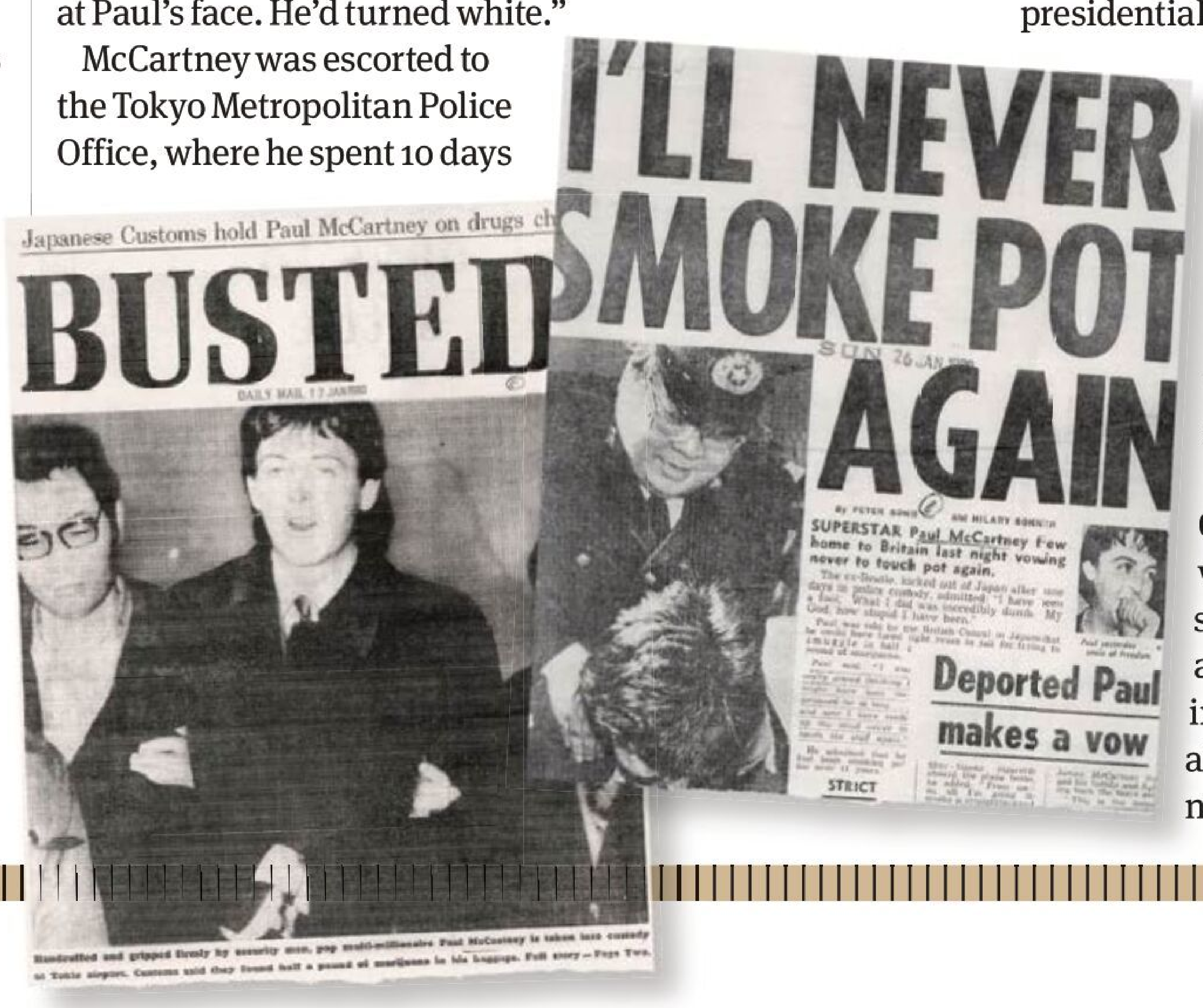
After some concern that he might go to prison, McCartney received a fine and was made to contribute £184,000 to the ticket refunds for the cancelled tour. He was then deported. Everyone in the Wings camp was furious with him for sabotaging a potentially lucrative tour, not least Denny Laine. The faithful Laine had been an ever-present since '71, on a system of retainers and salaries, and had co-written "Mull Of Kintyre" with McCartney. Later, suffering financial hardship, Laine sold McCartney his publishing rights to the song. In 1986 he was declared bankrupt. He now lives in either LA or Las Vegas – it's not clear from his MySpace page – and does not respond to *Uncut*'s email requesting an interview.

Wings officially ended in April 1981 when Laine left. By then, McCartney had released the solo LP, *McCartney II* (hit single: "Coming Up") and was wondering if the grass in the suitcase at Narita Airport had been subconsciously placed there by himself – as a non-negotiable, unequivocal way of freeing him from the pressure of a 1980 world tour. "I wondered. I wonder to this day if there was something strange like that. But it would be subconsciously, because I absolutely wasn't doing it on the surface. It [*his post-Wings solo career*] was a new start, an enforced new start. [*Pause*] Or was it? Did I subconsciously force it on myself? I don't know. It was a strange period."

> "DID I FORCE THE BUST ON MYSELF? I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS A STRANGE PERIOD"

Our interview is over. It's time for me to leave the presidential bubble. McCartney is still ruminating on spooky, subconscious matters as he shows me to the door. He says he recognises me now. I tell him he's mistaken, we've never met. But he's adamant: we've met before. I assure him we haven't.

"Is that right? Oh. Well, that's the wonderful thing about senility," he beams, accompanying me out into reception. "You're always meeting interesting new people."



Japanese Customs hold Paul McCartney on drugs ch

BUSTED

I'LL NEVER SMOKE POT AGAIN

SUPERSTAR Paul McCartney flew home to Britain last night vowing never to touch pot again.

Deported Paul makes a vow

STRICT

RELEASE DATE
DECEMBER 7
1971

WINGS

WILD LIFE

Love, reggae, mild recriminations and a new band… Wings' tentative first flight.

BY ROB YOUNG

PAUL McCARTNEY FIRST took the long and winding B842 to Kintyre in 1966, when he purchased High Park Farm, an isolated acreage containing three run-down farm buildings, a private loch and access to the beach. When Paul first brought Linda there in 1968, they had to sleep on old potato boxes and cook on a camping stove. After The Beatles broke up, he acquired the adjoining Low Ranadran Farm, and he and Linda spent increasing amounts of time in this rustic retreat. As well as cultivating vegetables (plus certain spiky plants) and riding horses, they set up a small studio in a tumbledown barn, where Paul sprouted material and a new beard.

Much of *Wild Life*, like *Ram* immediately before it, was written in these windblown conditions, and its recording at Abbey Road reflects its organic simplicity. As the four-piece band drape themselves across a bough overhanging an autumnal river on the sleeve, the complexity and inventiveness of *Sgt Pepper* and 'The White Album' have snagged on something far back upriver.

It's possible that the McCartneys had other things on their minds, too. In mid-September Linda gave birth to daughter Stella at a South London hospital. While Paul was staying overnight in the ward, he found himself juggling with names – not for their tiny daughter, but for their new-born band. "I was thinking for some reason of wings of a dove, wings of angels, wings of birds, wings of a plane," he once recalled, and the name of the outfit was formally announced the following month.

Written over one summer and banged out in a week, *Wild Life* is a brash and colourful fistful of first takes from a group which, at the time, probably had the most expectations in the world hanging over it. As the follow-through from *Ram* earlier in the year, it sounded even more downhome and gritty. Hysterical opener "Mumbo" benefited from the solid presence of new guitarist Denny Laine, fresh from The Moody Blues and Ginger Baker's Airforce, becoming the band's second Denny alongside drummer Seiwell. While lambasting it as "vacuous, flaccid, impotent, trivial and unaffecting", *Rolling Stone* critic John Mendelsohn stated, on the positive side, that *Wild Life* utterly evaded the pretentiousness of the recent solo work of John Lennon and George Harrison.

> *WILD LIFE* SOUNDED EVEN MORE DOWNHOME AND GRITTY THAN *RAM*

Paul was heading towards a plainness of expression, a transparency, rather than the world-saving pronouncements, avant-garde flirtations and cod-mystical leanings of John and George, while at the same time giving an inkling (in the title track) of his future environmental concerns. But *Wild Life* is also, in hindsight, a touching and involved portrait of a loving, working marriage. Something in the highland water was changing his makeup. But first, there was Paul's own cultural status to deal with. Already there was a younger generation of fans for whom there was now no Beatles. In this light, "Bip Bop" has to be an impromptu pisstake of T.Rex, with Paul impersonating Bolan on lines like *"Put your hair in curlers, we're going to see a band."*

Meanwhile, Paul and Linda were discovering the sounds of Africa and the Caribbean, which perhaps explains their decision to render Micky & Sylvia's 1957 hit "Love Is Strange" as sunshine reggae. Paul's slide guitar solo – an electric homage to Joseph Spence garnished with Hawaiian pineapple –

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Paul has made a discothèque album. This is a real shady club goodie, but you'll have to wear a tie… A dream album for airline hostesses, but there's too many maraccas around and not enough balls."

ROY HOLLINGWORTH, MM, DEC 11, 1971

"*Wild Life* is a bit odd, though not in the derogatory sense. Depending on which side you play first, you'll find yourself bouncing up and down to good, old-fashioned rock'n'reggae, or closing your eyes, enjoying soft, dreamy romantic songs…"

RG, NME, NOVEMBER 20, 1971

makes the track one of the album's feelgood highlights. A less successful attempt at evoking the good life is "Tomorrow", which imagines feasting on bread and cheese while lazing about in the countryside. In this case, though, the picnic blanket is liberally spread with Beatles harmonies.

But the 'simplicity' of *Wild Life* shouldn't be overstated. There are clear signs that McCartney has been doing a lot of thinking up there in the sticks, and the album contains two of his most direct addresses to John Lennon from this antagonistic period. "Wild Life" itself is a curious beast. Given the shouty exaggeration of Paul's delivery – surely a gesture towards Lennon's 'primal scream' vocalisations on *Plastic Ono Band* – it's hard to take its surface message (contrasting untamed nature with animals in the zoo) seriously. Then there's the decidedly odd metalinguistic preface over naïf acoustic picking: *"The word 'wild' applies to the words 'you' and 'me'."* With its gently weeping guitar solo, elephantine rhythm and rainbow multi-tracked harmonies, "Wild Life" wouldn't have sounded out of place on *Abbey Road*.

"Some People Never Know", though way too long at six and a half minutes, manages a tactful retreat from Lennon's attack on "How Do You Sleep?" (*"Some people can sleep at night time/ Believing that love is a lie/I'm only a person like you, love/And who in the world can be right all the right time?"* Unfortunately, he was in danger of retreating too far into self-indulgently silly love songs like "I Am Your Singer", a sugar-water duet for him and Linda with folky wood flutes and flaky man/wife harmonies.

The second song aimed at Lennon, "Dear Friend", ends the album on a minor key. It's the one track featuring a richer arrangement, with strings, distant sax and encroaching horns toward the end. As McCartney alludes to "Imagine" and "A Day In The Life" with jabbing piano chords and dramatic pauses, he baldly states that he is *"Really, truly, newly wed"* and asks the 'friend', *"Are you a fool or is it true?/Are you afraid or is it true?"* In contrast to Lennon's self-mythologies around his relationship with Yoko, the coldness of these communications – withholding as much as they reveal – deliver a strong riposte without descending into abuse. Nevertheless, it's clear the apple barrel remained soured (*Wild Life* rejected the customary Granny Smith image on its label, replacing the familiar logo with photos of the happy couple).

Earlier, on "Wild Life", McCartney had castigated his opponent for *"breathing a lot of political nonsense in the air"*. Wings themselves, having delivered a debut largely free of engagement with any realities occurring south of Hadrian's Wall, rushed out a hastily recorded single (not included on the LP), "Give Ireland Back To The Irish" – in which Paul got off the fence and found himself banned by the BBC for his pains. This, coupled with the album's low sales and negative reviews, meant the band's initial sortie was hampered by clipped feathers – a situation the following year's heavy touring would seek to rectify.

TRACKMARKS WILD LIFE

1 Mumbo ★★★★
2 Bip Bop ★★★
3 Love Is Strange ★★★
4 Wild Life ★★★★
5 Some People Never Know ★★
6 I Am Your Singer ★★
7 Tomorrow ★★
8 Dear Friend ★★★★

Label: Apple
Produced by: Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney
Recorded at: Abbey Road Studios, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass guitar, guitar, piano, keyboards, percussion), Linda McCartney (keyboards, piano, percussion, vocals), Denny Laine (guitars, bass, percussion, keyboards, vocals), Denny Seiwell (drums, percussion)
Highest chart position: UK 11; US 10

Wings in '72: "We've got a hell of a lot of room for improvement..."

“I don’t think we’re quite as good as the Stones, yet…”

February 1972. ***MICHAEL WATTS*** joins Wings in the studio as they put the finishing touches to “Give Ireland Back To The Irish”… “I’ve never attempted anything like this!” Then, 10 months later, Paul opens up to ***ALAN SMITH*** about Linda, the Beatles break-up, his ongoing relationship with Lennon and, of course, the boundless potential of Wings. “I like peasants. We’re peasants, too!”

EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

Paul and Linda live with Wings at the Théâtre Antique, Arles, July 1972

Melody Maker
SABBATH DAZE
McCARTNEY'S IRISH KICK

TAKEN FROM
MELODY MAKER
12/02/1972

MACKA, AS THEY used to call him at school, was sitting behind the mixing console in Island Records' basement studio, listening to the vocal thundering from the four speakers.

"Why don't we compress it?" suggested someone from the gloom. "Yeah," he said, turning to the engineer at his side. "If we compress it, what happens?"

"It gets squashed."

"Yeah, but not like squashed," he persisted. "Can't it belong on another level?" Long moment of hesitation. "Oh, let's hear it flat again, then. OK?" *"Give Ireland back to the Irish/Don't make them have to take it away/Give Ireland back to the Irish/Make Ireland Irish today..."*

Meanwhile, the Missus is seated on a rumpled black leather chair in front of a control board, wearing a thin voluminous dress, patterned with huge red carnations, that stretches to mid-calf. They've hardly slept for the past two days.

Later, after this chorus, this state of the nation has been played for the 50th time, Linda confides. The lyrics are really child-like, she says: "I think Paul feels embarrassed – or he feels he should be."

Well, Mr McCartney has certainly never done anything like it before. "Give Ireland Back To The Irish", the first single from Wings, will confound all those critics who have labelled his records as superficial muzak. The Mr and Mrs have made a record of an overtly political nature, entirely sympathetic to the Catholics in Ireland, and as heavily focused in lyrical content as anything John Lennon has put down since he went solo. In fact, these lines are more assimilable than "Power To The People", say, because McCartney is projecting a specific situation. Thus one verse: *"Tell me, how would you like it/If on your way to work/You were stopped by Irish soldiers?"* Then he comes in with a sharp, staccato riff. *"Would you lie down?/Do nothing?/Would you give in?/Go berserk?"* The last word is strung out in a long, high wail.

This from Paul – vacuous, trivial, ingenuous, uncommitted Paulie? Jesus, what's happened? First Bob Dylan, now McCartney. The return of social consciousness to pop on a large scale.

Maybe. I'm amazed. And so seems McCartney. "It's not really me," he says, turning aside from the console. "At least, I think people will be surprised because I've never attempted anything like this. It was Bloody Sunday. I woke up a few days ago with the thought in me head and wondered why don't I do it? You read the papers and you don't take it in. You don't realise that that's happening.

"The song's like, the Irish liked us before and now they hate us. What I'm saying is that in the beginning it was the Protestants against the Catholics but now it's the Irish against us. The Protestants are all like Heath. They're English, the landowners. If you send the troops in there, then what can you expect but the people to be mad? You wouldn't like it if some guy came into your home and started ordering you around. So I'm saying this to the Government, to Heath. And it's also a bit like with Apple and me, being prevented from owning what is mine."

The record prompts several thoughts. Is McCartney answering Lennon, forever pontificating on political issues. Is he sincere in what he's saying? And what, if any, significance can be attached to it?

First, McCartney, who has been the least active and publicised member of The Beatles since the split, is at last emerging from a period when he deliberately sought to de-escalate the fame, the ballyhoo and mystique that had previously surrounded him. It's possible that there may have been some development with Apple of which we are unaware: but the more likely explanation is that now he is in close contact with other musicians, ie, the rest of Wings, who have greatly increased his appetite for both performing and

Wings
Give Ireland back to the Irish
(McCartney and McCartney)
Produced by the McCartneys
Wings

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

recording, just as his association with the other Beatles stimulated him in the past. In short, he's become more ambitious, more self-confident, so that a theme which he may have thought behind him previously, he now feels capable of expressing.

HOWEVER, THOSE WHO will see this record as an emulation of Lennon's pronouncement on society, or even a parody of them, will be attributing to McCartney a degree of subtlety which none of his previous work has evinced (is "Dear Friend" that ingenious?). It's not difficult, though, to imagine McCartney, who has a definite Liverpool Irish background, writing about a country with which he most likely has some kind of affinity.

And yet, despite what I take to be obvious sincerity in intention, as a musical policeman he doesn't quite convince me. Not only is there nothing in his track record which suggests him for such a role, but his sentiments here are somewhat crass. It's inevitable, I suppose, in a pop single, that the expression of so large an idea becomes inordinately simplified, comes dangerously close to sloganising, but that's what he wanted, perhaps.

Without a shadow of a doubt, it will be taken up as a battle cry by elements here and in Ireland, where "The Men Behind The Wire", a song about internment, is already high in the charts. And it will, incidentally, put him on a parallel with Lennon, who some time ago gave money for the financing of an IRA film.

Whatever the political comment, it's a fine piece of pop music. The chorus is in the form of a rousing singalong, the musicianship is great – Henry McCullough, who joined three weeks back, is heard on slide – and Paul himself wails with enough conviction. Linda is in there, too – playing single notes on an electric piano that emerge sounding like a glockenspiel. It was recorded at EMI studios last week.

McCartney is keeping his fingers crossed that the same company will give him the go-ahead to release it this week with a flipside called "Version" after the practice of reggae singles – that is, simply the instrumental backing of the cover, supplemented by penny whistles. His fear is that they object to the lyrics.

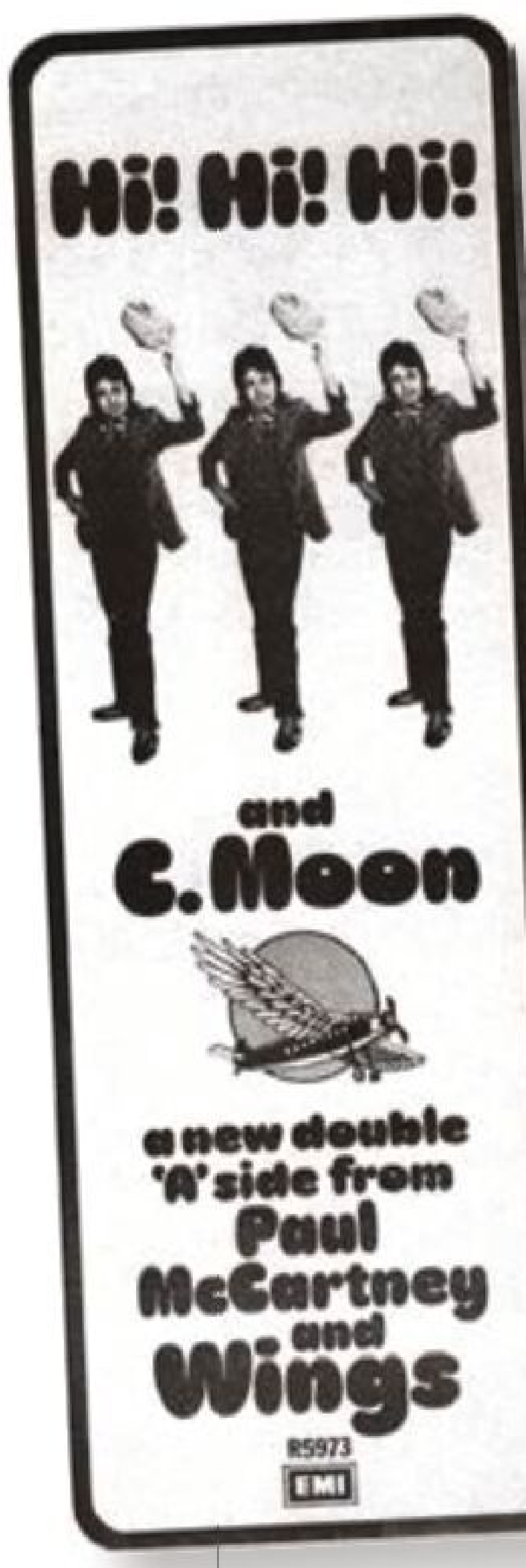
They may well. After all, why not give Scotland back to the Scots, or Wales back to the Welsh? Why not? says McCartney. He was drawing designs for Wings T-shirts as I left.

MICHAEL WATTS

WINGS BRITISH TOUR
MUSICAL EXPRESS
NOW, A TOMMY MOVIE?

TAKEN FROM
NME
16 & 23/12/1972

The title of the B-side of "Hi Hi Hi" is "C Moon". Why "C Moon"?
Sam The Sham, in one of his songs, used the expression "L seven"... Which is L, and a 7 means square. So I – in one of my bright moments – thought C and moon is like the opposite. Clever. So C Moon, I just took that, and that means cool. So then the whole song is like, she's cool.



Were these songs written at varying times?
"Hi Hi Hi" was written in Spain, because we had this tour coming up which we didn't have an awful lot of material for. The European tour. And we need something to kind of rock on. So we did this number. We originally did it different. We've revamped it for the single.

How about the BBC ban on "Hi Hi Hi". Were you surprised?
Not being quite that thick, we all thought, you know, it might be possible. The story is actually only about sex, not drugs. It's something to sing. I don't care about the lyrics. Not really.

How prolific is your songwriting these days?
Pretty prolific ("millions of them" – Linda). We've got about 30-odd tunes that we've got, like, done at the moment for the next album.

In *NME* recently, John is talking about...
John who?

John Lennon. He's talking about quite liking the idea of playing with you these days – if you're interested... How do you feel about it?
The story, in a nutshell, is that The Beatles broke up, but didn't break up any contracts or anything. So, all the Beatles monies still stayed where they all were.

All the Beatles rights were still controlled by Klein. So that was the reason I had to kind of stand fast and say: "Well, I don't want him." The only alternative for me was to have Klein, and keep on with the whole thing. So what happened is, we fought the Klein thing, and now I think we stand a chance of him giving all of us – all of us – some kind of release. This means we will get all our own royalties coming to us separately. That was all I wanted. And now, since that's beginning to look a bit better, our relations between ourselves are quite cool now. They're quite good. Once it's sorted out, I don't see any reason why we, maybe, wouldn't want to play with each other.

Maybe it's impractical to think of The Beatles, in the future, as a kind of permanent working unit. But could you see yourselves musically coming together once in a while?
That kind of thing might happen, yes. But really, all it's down to is the fact that if you are in a job, and you're treated wrong by the management or by the Government, or by someone kind of a bit official – you can either just go with it and think, well this is life, we've got to go in the Common Market kind of thing. So let's go. Or you've got to like dig your heels in and say, well, I'm not gonna go. This is the case with the Beatles thing. Really, that's all it's been down to for us. Once that's sorted – which I think may be soon – well, then everything's cool. There's no telling what might happen then.

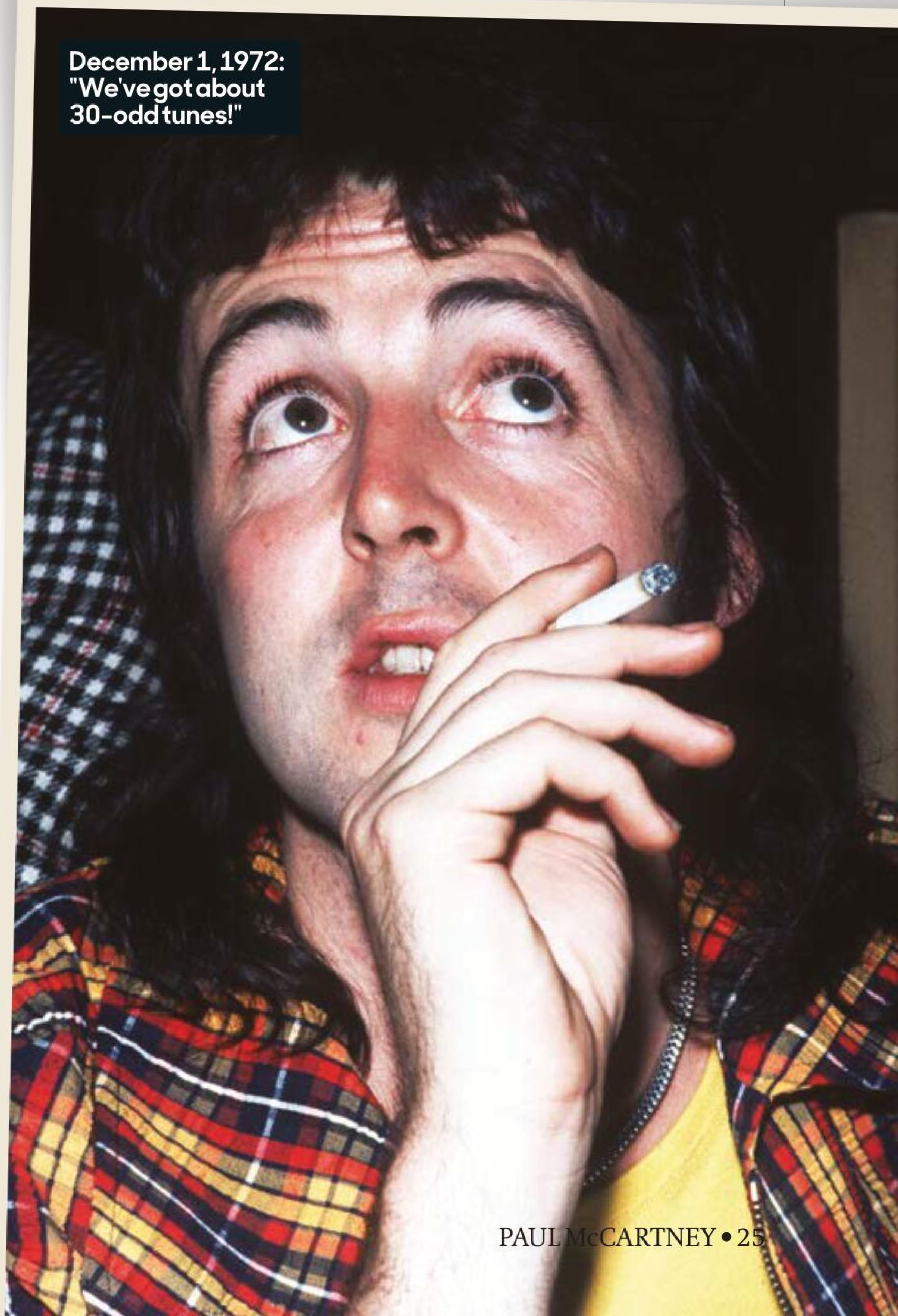
What would you say has been Linda's influence, musically, on you?
She helped me simplify. It's mainly a wife's influence... girlfriend-type influence. But mainly, just simplification.

If I were to pin anything on solo album stuff, it would be that I felt that you were getting into complexities. I felt that there was a kind of raggedness, and that everything was being tried – that you were losing good, solid, rocking melodic direction?
That's true, yes. Soul – that's the thing, really. With the break-up of The Beatles I didn't dig it at all, obviously. At the end of The Beatles, everything was a bit kind of ragged for me, a bit disheartening. Since that, I think I'm getting more back to what I'm about a bit – you know, melodies. Tunes, simple...

"I'M GETTING BACK TO WHAT I'M ABOUT – MELODIES, TUNES..."

Some people thought you'd be ashamed of your ability to write good melodies.
No matter what you say, and cover up and hide and stuff, if you're with a band – even a remotely successful band for 10 years – when you split

ANWAR HUSSEIN/GETTY IMAGES



December 1, 1972: "We've got about 30-odd tunes!"

up there was inevitably a lot of kind of “He’s like a bloody Engelbert Humperdinck” from the other people in the band. I got little remarks like that. Well, you do think, ‘I’ll bloody show you I’m not, mate – I can rock with the best of them, I’m as complex as any of them.’ And I started for a period, going away from my normal things. Just simple things…

The funny thing is, it’s all coming back to that. Right now.

Well, I think it always will. See, with The Beatles like, that was kind of what I knew. People are always people… no matter how far out everything gets. I mean, underneath Alice Cooper there’s a fellah. And that’s the kind of basic fact behind a lot of what goes on. For instance, “Mary Had A Little Lamb” wasn’t a great record, but the funny thing about that is we’ve got a whole new audience of eight-year-olds and five- and six-year-olds – like Pete Townshend’s daughters.

Do you mind that? A lot of people might ask like, “Where the hell are you at?”

I can understand why. I think if I was just knocking around the record business, and someone made a record like “Mary Had A Little Lamb”, I’d think, maybe, ‘I’m not that keen on it’…

But looking back on it, and looking forward on it, and all of those kind of things – it really works, you know. I mean, on our tour it was really a big number, man. It was ridiculous. I mean, it’s only kind of a kids’ number. But it’s one of those where you can get an audience singing.

Would you regard yourself as an establishment-related artist – as having “sold out your generation to the straights”?

No, that’s rubbish – all that kind of thing. It’s rubbish.

How do you feel about the hostility towards Linda from those who resent her presence in the band?

With the breakup of The Beatles, everything was explained. It was, “What are the lads doing?” Well, we stopped touring. When The Beatles broke up I, for instance, just buzzed off with Linda, and we just did what we felt like. We didn’t feel like doing any press, so we didn’t do any. Then people started coming out with all these, you know, “He’s a hermit” kind of things. Naturally, I could read the papers, and I could sit there and think, ‘Well, I’m not a hermit. They’re wrong, obviously. I can tell what I am. I’m not living in London any more – but that doesn’t make me a hermit.’

Because, you know, lots of people live in Glasgow, and lots of people live in Aberdeen, and they don’t feel funny. But no-one rings them up via the press every day, saying, “You’re funny – you live in Aberdeen.” So I just didn’t feel that I had to answer it.

“THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T ACCEPT LINDA HAVE NEVER SEEN THE BAND”

Obviously, the Prince Rainier way of handling this would have been to say, “Ladies and gentlemen, this is my lady wife, Linda” on ITN… like have a big press conference after we got married and saying, “Please understand her, she’s human.” Now the thing is, I didn’t really feel like I needed to do that. But I’ll tell you – the people who don’t accept Linda are nearly always the people who’ve never seen the band.

A lot of people who came to see us in Europe were really quite kind of pleased with Linda. I’ll tell you, she’s really gonna do something. Not in a kind of far-out way, where she’s going to make her own albums. I don’t think it will get in that kind of direction. I just think that as part of the band. Like I say, you remember when The Beatles started? No-one could hardly play anything… Everyone knew a few chords. When you come from obscurity, that’s the normal way. I can name a few bands around at the moment where people can’t play much, but they can get it on.

I once heard you described as the Nina and Frederick of rock…

It’s not that kind of thing. It’s only a small role she plays, you know. It’s not as if she’s playing, like, any huge kind of role. I mean, the main role Linda is playing is that she happens to be “my wife”. I mean that’s the main kind of role thrust on her. In actual fact, I look on Linda, with regard to the band, just as a piano player. She also takes the little bits – a harmony singer. There’s no kind of big deal. Bet you’d be surprised – like the audiences on our tour, you know. She always used to get a clap when she came on, in, like “I’m Your Singer”. We were a bit dubious about all this, but she used to get the clap all the time. The clap, of course, is referring to applause.

Does it hurt, these snides against Linda – or don’t you give a damn anyway?

Linda: Well, to begin with I’m not really pushy, y’know, like I want to be a star. I want to play. I’m in it to have fun. The last tour was great fun.

Paul: The answer to this question is that it has hurt her in the past – weep, weep, there are things that hurt when someone says them – for instance when John married Yoko everybody said, “Bloody Jap”. And if you think that didn’t hurt them, then you’re daft. If you go marry someone you fancy and everyone goes saying, “She’s bloody ’orrible, mate” – it hurts.

The main thing that’s happened with Linda and me is that since The Beatles have split, we explain an awful lot of what we were doing. If we’d kind of really been careful, like about *Ram* or something, and set up some kind of publicity machine before it all, and tuned all your minds into it – maybe it would have been different. But we just bunged it on your desk and said, “Look – Love us or Hate us.” And a lot of people said, “Well, we hate you then.” Fair enough, we hate you – OK. And I think a lot of that’s happened by default.

February 1972: Mary McCartney, Denny Laine, Henry McCullough, Paul and Linda McCartney

Do you now regard Wings as fully “run-in” – and if so, aren’t they long overdue for some British dates?

Well, there’s the British tour in April, and we had our little period of getting it together because you’ve got to have that. You need to work yourself in. I mean The Beatles had three, four or five years before we made a record… We were together as a band. Slade had been together long before they made a record, too, and the Stones were together for a hell of a long time, too, before they made a record.

Linda: It’s also a question of getting a bunch of people together and saying: “Hey, now we’re gonna be tight, we love each other, we know each other.” We just, none of us, knew each other before.

I take it that audiences don’t scream at you any more. Any feelings on this?

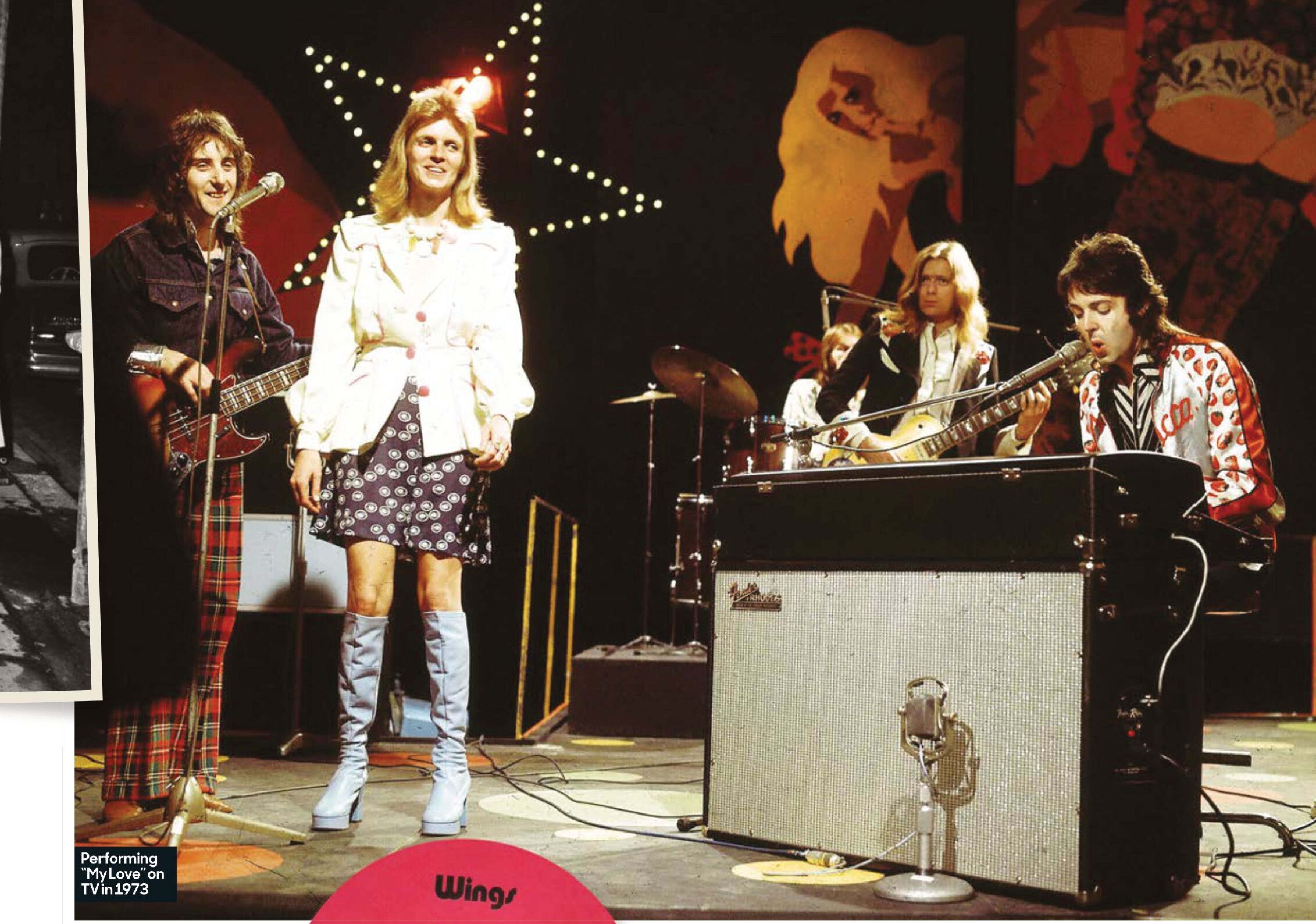
I don’t know, you know. I like an audience that raves. We had some real good signs off that European tour. Listening to the tapes, it’s obvious we’re still pretty new as a band. I’m not going to deny that, either, because it’s stupid. There’s nothing wrong with it, nothing to be ashamed of. We are very new.

In fact, we’ve turned that thing around in our own minds – and we’re chuffed that we’re new. Actually, I feel that in a way that we’ve got it over people like the Stones… although I don’t think we’re quite as good as them, yet. But we’ve got a hell of a lot of room for improvement in our band. And that’s always a great thing.

I once read you were very much the kind of person who liked to direct operations.

With Wings I can do anything I like, really. They’re good – they would just do anything I wanted. But in fact, we don’t do it like that. We

WATFORD/MIRRORPIX/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES



Performing "My Love" on TV in 1973

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS

turn up at a session and we all throw ideas in. I come up to them with material and stuff. We know what it's about as far as that's concerned – it's for all of us, it's just to produce good music. I don't think anyone's that hung up about how we achieve it.

Are you aware you're the only ex-member of The Beatles still producing his own album?
I sometimes feel the need for other producers, and sometimes I do use other producers. We used Glyn Johns on a couple of tracks. But we were a bit restricted there...
Linda: You would like an engineer to get great sounds.

Do you think the George Martin days...
We've just done something with George – just the other week. We did a great track for the next Bond film called "Live And Let Die", which unfortunately will not be released for a long time. But it's a good track.

What about the album situation?
This next album will be very good, I think. I hate to go talking about this, in case there's 50 incredible ones out at the same time and ours turns out not so hot. But I think ours is good, you know. There's a lot of good stuff on it, some great tunes. It's a bit more melodic, I think. But it bops; there are some great bopping tracks.

Wings
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R5973 45 r.p.m. Made in UK 7YCE 21692
All Rights of the Manufacturer and of the Owner of the Recorded Work Reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance, Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited.
Hi, Hi, Hi
(Paul and Linda McCartney)
Produced by Paul McCartney
McCartney Music Ltd.
by arrangement with ATV Music Ltd.
EMI Records Ltd.

Have you added much instrumentation?
We have used some added instrumentation, but the best way is obviously for you to hear it.

I don't want to go on about it. I think it'll be out in February and I think it'll be a double. The idea is just to get working, working, working, working. So it's all down to a whole load of work, because I like that – doing TV shows, doing work. I wouldn't even mind appearing on *The Mike And Bernie Winters Show*. I read people knocking *Top Of The Pops*, but I'm telling you, I watch it just because it's pop. In Britain you just don't have anything – and I'd rather watch that than the news any day. *Top Of The Pops*, *Tom And Jerry*... I mean, they may be a bit for kids, but I'm a kid then, because I dig that stuff. I think rather than don't do *Top Of The Pops*, you should do *Top Of The Pops*. Rather than drop a show like this, there should be five more like it.

Is there any restriction on composing within the band?
Oh no – Denny's got a great one on the next album. It's really just that if anyone turns up with a good song, OK. If it's a lousy song, then we wouldn't use it. And we've got Denny singing one of our songs on the next album. We're trying to put it around a bit, so it's a nice kind of unit. The thing about our band is, everyone likes to be in a band. There's not much more to it than that.

We're all from varying parts of the globe, and we're all from varying upbringings. We couldn't be more different people unless we had a few Chinamen in there. We're all pretty different. But whatever we're doing, we're doing it together now. The thing that's eventually going to tell, obviously, is the music. I mean – if we write great stuff; if I write some great songs; if Denny starts writing great songs – great. I think some of the songs we've got are really very warm, very kind of soul, very nice stuff. It's stuff you can sing to.

Do you still travel about a great deal?
Oh yeah, not half. Wouldn't anyone? We go to the Caribbean whenever we can, because that's incredible. That is like, you know, paradise, Jamaica – that's very nice. I like peasants – people-people. We're peasants, too, from all corners of the globe, a gang of peasants who want to be in a musical entertainment. This is the whole idea. It's like in medieval days. A few people just got together and made some music to make themselves happy, and then to make people happy off it. That's really all it is for me.

I occasionally want to make some little political statements, occasionally want to do a kids' song, but we're not too heavily into that stuff. The main thing, still, is just the music. That comes off. If you like "Hi Hi Hi" then you like Wings.

ALAN SMITH

RELEASE DATE
MAY 4
1973

WINGS

RED ROSE SPEEDWAY

"My love does it good..." The confidence comes back.

BY JASON ANDERSON

IT'S A REFLECTION of the often haphazard nature of Wings' early recordings that the most sublime moment on *Red Rose Speedway* nearly didn't happen. In fact, it owes its existence to the courage of a player whose patience would soon run out – who would leave before McCartney overcame his confidence-impaired predilection for half-measures and self-sabotage to initiate *Band On The Run*.

The heartening moment arrives at the 2:04 mark in "My Love", the first and only single on Wings' second long-player. The track's pretty fine up to that point too, what with the balance it strikes between "The Long And Winding Road"-style symphonic grandeur (supplied by an orchestra in Abbey Road, of course) and the groovier, roomier feel created by McCartney's electric piano part and Denny Seiwell's unhurried drumming. As is so often the case for the songwriter, the lyrics risk seeming banal – being comprised of little more than the line "*my love does it good*" and the usual complement of whoa-whoas – but they still inspire one of McCartney's warmest vocal performances of the period.

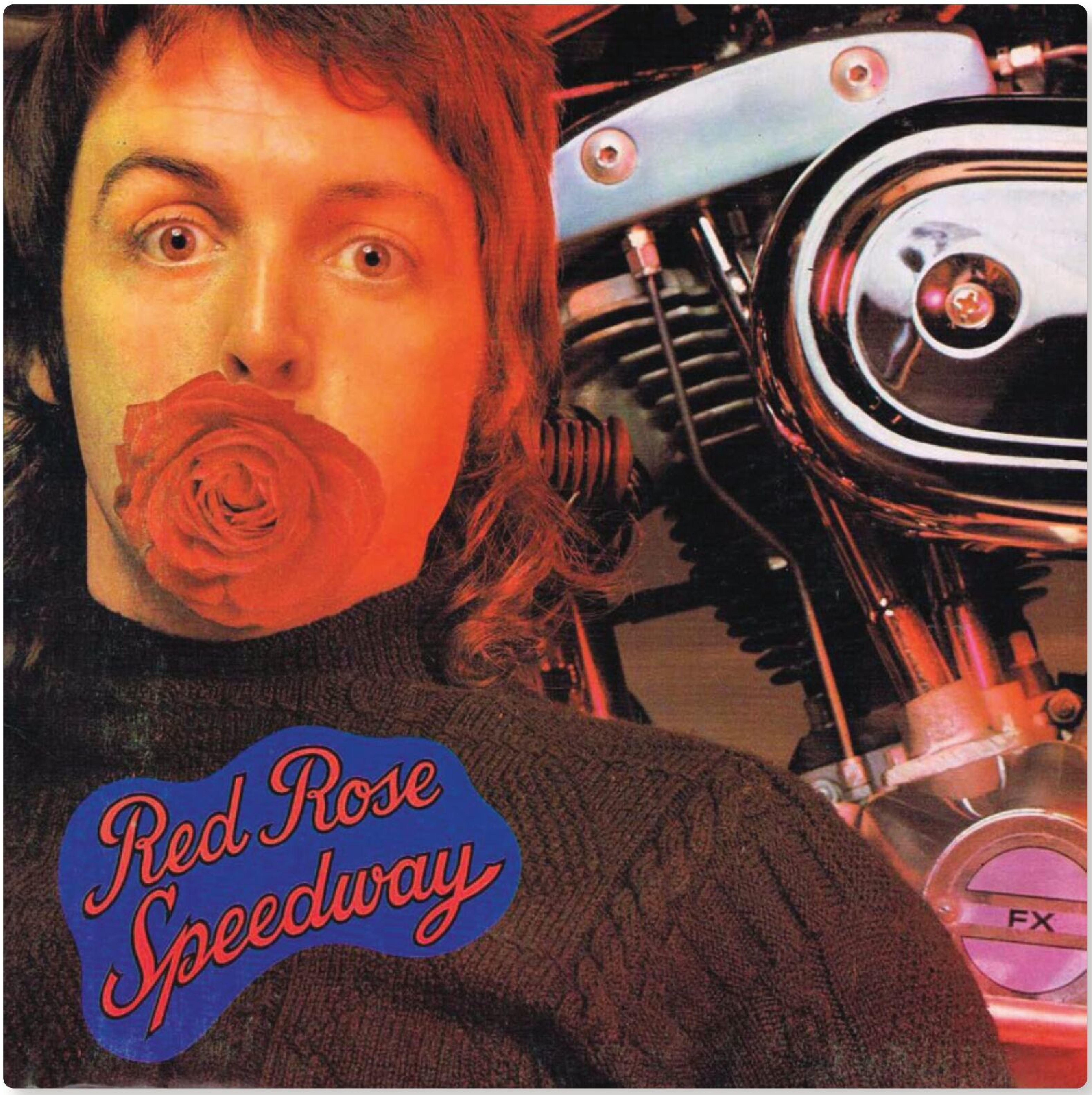
Yet Wings' ace in the hole is guitarist Henry McCullough, the former Sweeney's Men member and Joe Cocker sideman who came aboard two months before recording for *Red Rose Speedway* began in Los Angeles in March of 1972. Unhappy with the solo that McCartney had intended for him to play, he found the nerve to tell his often obstinate boss that he wanted to change it – to what, however, he had no idea. Captured in one take, McCullough's remarkably astute and entirely improvised contribution transforms what might've been another slice of middling McCartney to a masterstroke of transcendent schmaltz.

Arriving after three non-album singles – "Give Ireland Back To The Irish", "Mary Had A Little Lamb" and "Hi Hi Hi" – that elicited a far stronger response from BBC censors than they did from just about anyone else, "My Love" seemed like both a return to form and a harbinger of better (and more reassuringly Beatlesque) things to come. It was undoubtedly the biggest factor behind *Red Rose Speedway*'s rapid rise to No 5 in the UK and No 1 in the US when it followed the single into stores a few weeks later. The song also generated far more goodwill toward its creator in the spring of 1973 than did *James Paul McCartney*, a TV special that made its subject seem as out of touch with the rock zeitgeist of the early '70s as he did with the relatives and mates back home in Liverpool, assembled for a cringe-inducing on-camera knees-up.

Compared to that misstep, "My Love" was like a ray of light in a murky time for all involved. It would ultimately herald a change in public sentiment toward the man who broke up The Beatles – in a year's time, even John wouldn't think it was so cool to hate on Paul.

Unfortunately, the sumptuousness and swagger of "My Love" calls attention to the shortcomings that afflict the rest of *Red Rose Speedway*, which has glimmers of the old confidence and the new brio, but is hampered by a lack of focus and quality control. Most damning in regards to the latter was the four-part, *Abbey Road*-evoking song suite that closed Side Two, a cock-up so grave that even the album's defenders must've been relieved that Capitol successfully dissuaded McCartney from his original plan for a double album. If this was the best of the lot, then less was most definitely more (and less of that even better).

RED ROSE SPEEDWAY GLIMMERS WITH BRIO BUT SHOWS A LACK OF FOCUS



CRITICS' VERDICT

"This album has everything. Ballads, a little rock and country, and there's a solid band behind Paul. …It would be a crying shame if people were still putting them down now they've really got something to offer."

MARK PLUMMER, MELODY MAKER, APRIL 14, 1973

"Paul makes his stand here and, as far as I'm concerned, he's proved his point. And I also think that in the future he's going to be able to look back on the last three years without cringeing; which is more than I suspect Lennon will be able to do."

TONY TYLER, NME, APRIL 28, 1973

Despite the sturdy appeal of "My Love" as well as the charm of more modest songs like "One More Kiss", the scarcity of strong material could not be easily concealed. Fresh from his success with The Who and the Eagles, producer Glyn Johns could not hide his disdain for McCartney's batch of songs, at least three of which – "Big Barn Bed", "Get On The Right Thing" and the disarmingly pretty "Little Lamb Dragonfly" – had been kicking around since the sessions for *Ram*. (They were largely finished too, judging by the fact that McCullough wasn't added to the two latter tracks.) Failing to endear himself to the Wings boss, Johns quit in April, with McCartney assuming producer status as sessions resumed in London in October. Pickings remained thin, as would be confirmed by the public at large when songs that had been intended for the double LP – like "Country Dreamer", a nondescript ditty that became the B-side for "Helen Wheels" later in 1973 – made their way into the world.

Nevertheless, it's a testament to McCartney's knack for improving slight songs with canny arrangements that *Red Rose Speedway* holds together as well as it does until that closing medley. The most successful demonstrations of the spirit of bonhomie he so desired for his new band, "Big Barn Bed" and "Get On The Right Thing" both chug along as if their author wished the coda to "Hey Jude" had never ended. "Little Lamb Dragonfly" remains graceful and affecting despite a set of lyrics that could either be the lamentations of a lonely lover or a vegetarian's apology to all the animals he ate.

More easily discernible is the wry humour in "Single Pigeon", a small but very pleasurable Paul-at-the-piano number whose references to a "*Sunday morning fight about Saturday night*" distinguishes it as something other than another portrait of Linda-inspired cosy domesticity. As for the incongruously Krautrock-y instrumental that qualifies as *Red Rose Speedway*'s strangest song, "Loup (1st Indian On The Moon)" lands somewhere between Pink Floyd jam and *Neu! 2* outtake. It's just too bad that the tension dissipates just as McCullough and Laine's guitars and McCartney's loping bass and Moog squelches all begin to pool into one.

Perhaps that would've spared listeners from *Red Rose Speedway*'s final 11 hubris-soaked minutes. Whether it's the standard-issue music-hall jauntiness of "Hold Me Tight", the botched cosmic-country of "Lazy Dynamite" or the trite faux-Fab-isms of "Hands Of Love" and "Power Cut", the component parts would be largely irredeemable even without McCartney's perfunctory effort to stitch them together in the manner of one of his greatest triumphs as a Beatle. If the best of *Red Rose Speedway* marks a step forward for its maker in a troubled time, the finale sends him and his new mates three steps back. At this rate, it's hard to believe they'd ever reach the speed of sound…

TRACKMARKS RED ROSE SPEEDWAY

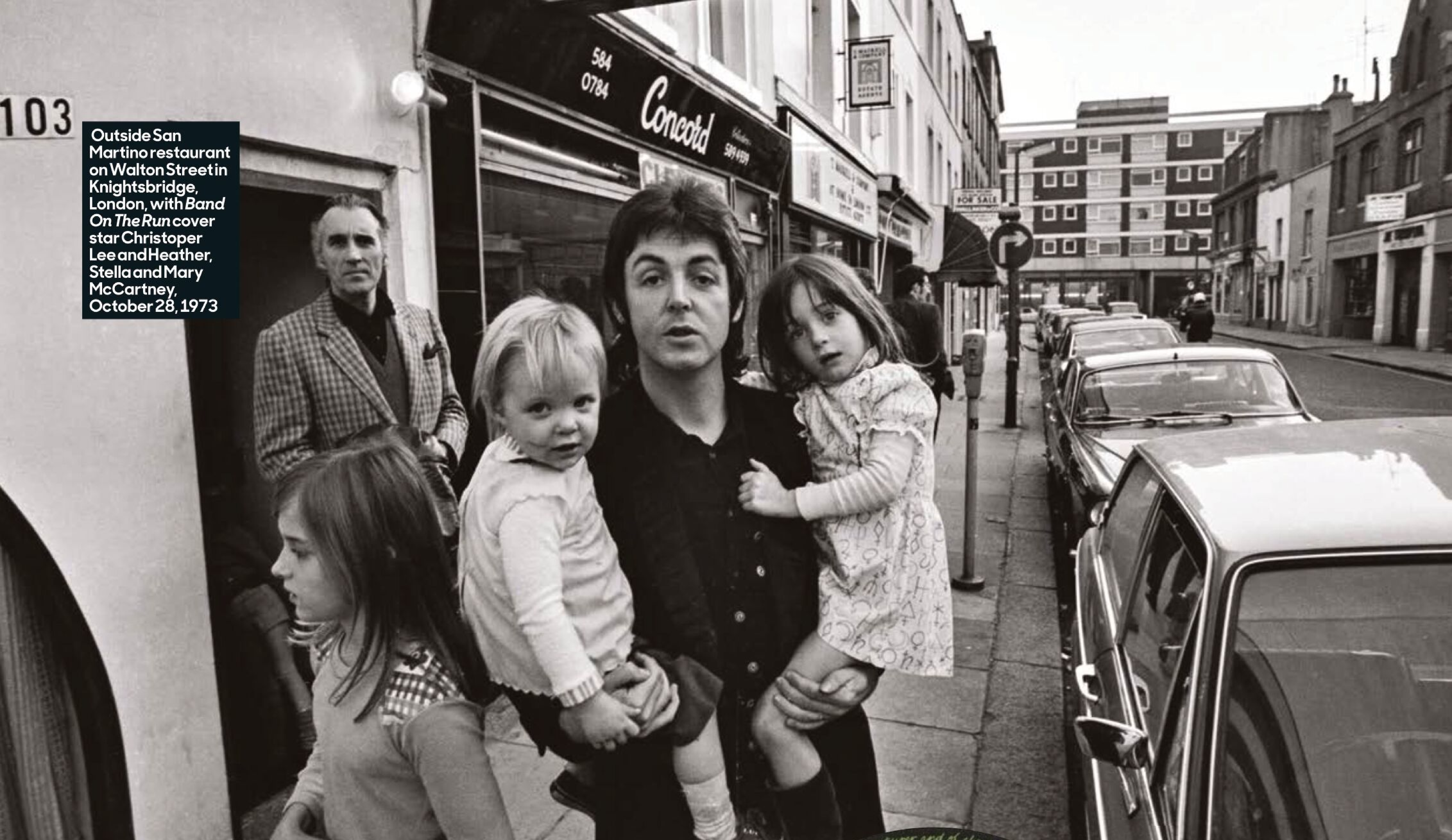
1 Big Barn Bed ★★★
2 My Love ★★★★
3 Get On The Right Thing ★★★
4 One More Kiss ★★★
5 Little Lamb Dragonfly ★★★
6 Single Pigeon ★★★★
7 When The Night ★★★
8 Loup (1st Indian On The Moon) ★★★
9 Medley: Hold Me Tight/Lazy Dynamite/Hands Of Love/Power Cut ★

Label: Apple
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Various locations in Los Angeles and Olympic Studio and Abbey Road Studios, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocal, bass, piano, elec piano, acoustic gtr, Moog, Mellotron, celeste), Linda McCartney (bk vocal, electric harpsichord, dingers, electric bass, piano, harmonies, organ), Denny Laine (bass, backing vocal, acoustic guitar, harmonies, drums, harmonica), Henry McCullough (elec gtr, acoustic gtr, harmonies, bk vocal, perc), Denny Seiwell (drums, perc, vocal, bass)
Highest chart position: UK 5; US 1

“I’ve always seen myself as a hack”

“...And being a hack, I’ll write a song for anyone!” Paul, Linda and baby Stella pop into the *Melody Maker* offices for egg sandwiches, crisps, glasses of Château Holborn Viaduct and a jovial chat with old chum ***CHRIS WELCH***. To be discussed, among other things, the small matter of a forthcoming album, *Band On The Run*...

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Outside San Martino restaurant on Walton Street in Knightsbridge, London, with *Band On The Run* cover star Christoper Lee and Heather, Stella and Mary McCartney, October 28, 1973

RONALD DUMONT/EXPRESS/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Melody Maker
ROCK CRISIS!

TAKEN FROM
MELODY MAKER
01/12/1973

WHEN THE Prime Minister, Royalty or a Rear Admiral makes a tour of inspection of a naval establishment, there is a flurry of activity among the ranks. Flags and bunting are flown, everything in sight is given a fresh coat of white paint or blanco, and the men line up to salute.

When Paul McCartney, Linda and their baby Stella visited the *Melody Maker* offices this week, half the staff had disappeared, smitten by food poisoning, and a plate of assorted crisps and meat sandwiches were offered for the visitors' delectation. "We were expecting lunch," said Paul hopefully. But he accepted this Fleet Street-style kwik-snak in good humour. In truth, this unique visit by a Winged Beatle caught the ancient guard of the *MM* somewhat on the hop. Paul, Linda, baby and friends were indulging in an activity so old that even I couldn't remember it. This was of a Beatle "going the rounds".

Back in the early '60s, even The Rolling Stones had been known to visit the offices of certain pop journals, in the hope of obtaining some suitable mention. Quite frequently they were ejected on their ear. One of the most famous debacles in pop history occurred when Bob Dawbarn turfed Bob Dylan out of the *MM* office, insisting that the guitar-toting beatnik was a giant lumber.

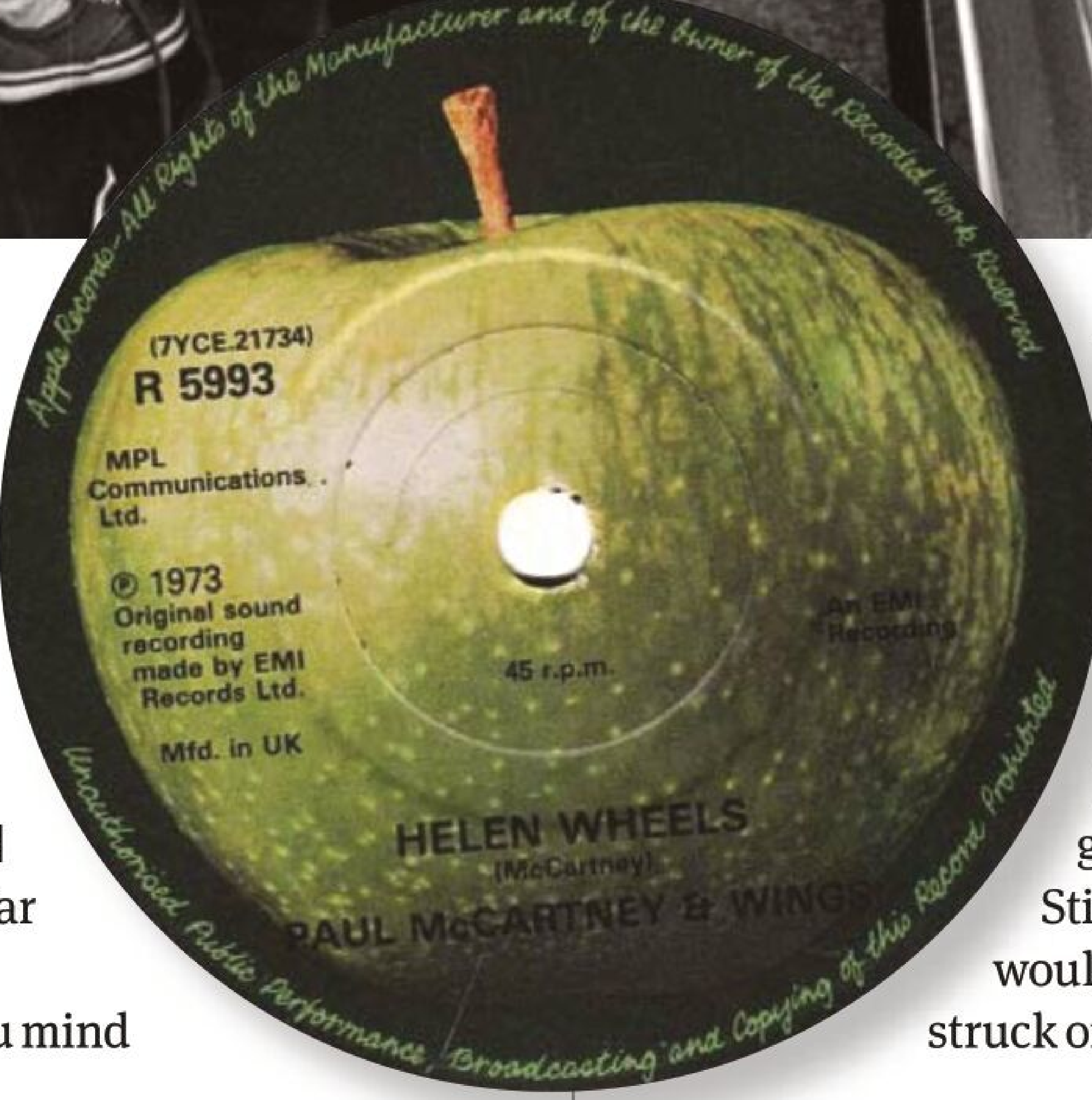
There was no danger of McCartney being dismissed with or without a flea in his ear. Even in this cynical age, when gibers mock, and mockers gibe, there was a distinct tremor of excitement at the prospect of the visitation.

It should be remembered that in the past, when so much happened to The Beatles, it seemed almost an affront to ask them about anything. To ask Paul about Apple, or Brian Epstein, for example, would be like button-holing Winston Churchill some minutes after thd conclusion of World War II and demanding, brusquely: "Would you mind repeating that?"

And yet Paul was not only affable, charming and frank. He was also voluble to the point where one could have asked him for a potted biography of the Merseybeat boom without fear of having an egg and anchovy sandwich hurled in the teeth. In order to chat, of Wings, and records and Africa and things, the family outing adjourned to the imperial *Melody Maker* boardroom, where great decisions affecting all our lives are made.

Paul in his bright red drape jacket looked like a cheerful Teddy Boy and Linda carefully divided her time between backing up Paul and preventing their child from scribbling abstract murals on the wallpaper. This normalising of relations with one of the greatest stars of rock'n'roll seemed so pleasant, it seemed unnecessary to ask the purpose of the visit, or hint darkly that perhaps not all was well with Wings. In the event, Paul explained the reason for the call, and the future of his extraordinary band.

"We couldn't think of anywhere else to do the interview. We thought we might as well come to you. For me, it takes me back 10 years at least, when we used to come touting ourselves round, although this time we're not touting ourselves. It was the very first thing we did when we came to London. I remember going to Robert Stigwood's office, and he wouldn't see us. Never been struck on him since."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HELEN WHEELS
(McCartney)
PAUL McCARTNEY & WINGS

MUCH MIRTH, AND a lighting of cigarettes. Glasses of Château Holborn Viaduct were poured, and a convivial atmosphere reigned. The last we had heard from Wings, they had been riven by splits, when drummer Denny Seiwell quit along with guitarist Henry McCullough, just prior to the group's trip to Lagos to record.

What caused all that, and how were the McCartneys received in Nigeria?

"We enjoyed it eventually. We're all a bit British y'know. First thing you have to adjust, as if you were going to Spain. You've the different food and climate and stuff so you've got a lot of adjusting to do. It was at the end of the rainy season when we went. We thought it was going to be tropical, warm and fantastic. It turned out to be a torrential monsoon.

"And we got robbed while we were down there. Some guys robbed us – with a knife. We got held up walking out late at night, and you're not supposed to do that. They took our tape recorder and cameras and gear. So that didn't help. And then Fela Ransome Kuti accused us of trying to

steal black African music. So I had to say, 'Do us a favour, Fela. We do all right as it is, actually. We sell a couple of records here and there.' And he's welcome to their music. It's very nice. I love it, and wish I could do it, but he's welcome to it.

"But he does have a fantastic band out there, one of the best live bands I've ever heard. It's funky and not very sophisticated. You saw it in Ginger Baker's film, but it didn't come off at all well in the film. There was one and a half weeks of pretty bad vibes. It felt a bit dangerous and raw, and you're not sure how you're going to figure.

"The press were fine, charming. But it's funny what they pick up. They picked up that I was 'the one who introduced drugs to The Beatles'. It's such a long range from the source, they must have picked up stories through about 50 African countries before they got to them, and they're really garbled accounts. I think they just give everyone a hard time to see what you're made of."

What lured them to Africa?

"Sunshine," said Linda.

"We got a list off EMI of all the studios around the world. It's a big company. We checked on the availability of Lagos and it turned out it would be free for the three weeks we wanted to record. So we thought great – lying on the beach all day, doing nothing. Breeze in the studios and record. It didn't turn out quite like that. But that was why we went – it was for an adventure. We did seven tracks there and came back and did a couple of tracks and mixed here."

How did they get on with, er, the insects?

"Oh, not too bad. It does bother some people. We're not creepy-crawly freaks. Linda and lizards – great. She doesn't mind. But somebody else, for instance the engineer we took out, who did *Sgt Pepper* and *Abbey Road*, he couldn't stand them. So a couple of the lads put a spider in his bed. It was a bit like scout camp. The worst a lizard can do is bite you, so we're not freaked out by that, not like Ringo's wife who can't stand a fly in the room. She has all their positions charted, and if one comes near her, she freaks out."

Having just heard a portion of the album, it didn't sound at all African-influenced.

"It isn't," agreed Paul. "Well, it is, but you wouldn't be able to hear it. I know it was influenced by Africa, just because of the atmosphere rather than the music. In Africa I felt like you had to come on. In England you can lay it back, and be timid and you get away with it, because nobody minds. Out there, you've got to be very forward. And there's no way you can lay on them modern Western liberal crap. So in a way we were influenced by the challenge of the people and country.

"Linda thought I'd died one night. I was recording and suddenly felt like a lung had collapsed. So I went outside to get some air, and there wasn't any. It was a humid, hot tropical night. So I collapsed and fainted."

Said Linda: "I laid him on the ground and his eyes were closed and I thought he was dead!"

Paul went to the doctor, who advised him he'd been smoking too much. When the McCartneys got over their initial worries, they found Nigeria was an exciting, friendly country. But only three of Wings made the trip. What happened to the others?

"Only Denny [*Laine*] was with us. You know two of them left? Denny [*Seiwell*] and Henry quit and Denny rang up an hour before we left from Gatwick, to say he couldn't make the album, so that was a panic time. Henry left over what we call 'musical differences'. And it was actually that. We were rehearsing and I asked him to play a certain bit, he was loathe to play it, and kinda made an excuse about it couldn't be played. I, being a bit of a guitarist myself, knew it could be played, and rather than let it pass, I decided to confront him with it. He left rehearsals a bit choked, then rang up to say he was leaving. I thought, 'Fair enough', so it was the stereotyped 'musical difference'. And Denny didn't want to come to Africa."

> "I LAID PAUL ON THE GROUND, EYES CLOSED. I THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD!"
>
> LINDA McCARTNEY

How did they make up the numbers?

"There was just the three of us, on the album, except for the orchestral overdubs, which we didn't play. We got Tony Visconti to help with the arrangements.

"One guy, Remi Kebaka, who is from Lagos, ironically, turned up in London for a loon, and we got him on one track playing percussion. He's the only other person on the entire album, except for the orchestra. I played all the drums and bass. Denny sometimes doubles on bass."

When did Paul first get into playing drums?

"For years I like suggested to Ringo a lot of what he might play and I heard drums well. I first got into it listening to 'Sweet Little Sixteen', where there was a drum break around the kit. I would ask Ringo to play some variation on that. And at sessions I would climb on the drum kit and start having a go. And in Hamburg, one week Tony Sheridan's drummer got sick and I drummed for him, for the extra cash, for a week. So I've done a bit of drumming, including a couple of Beatle tracks, but nothing much that I can remember.

"We always used Ringo because he's a real drummer. There's nothing flash to the drumming on the Wings album, nothing difficult. But I can hold quite a good beat. Liking drums anyway, it gave me a good chance to fulfil an ambition."

MOST OF THE songs on the album, called *Band On The Run*, incidentally, were actually written in Scotland, at the McCartney retreat.

"It's a collection of songs, and I'll leave it to you to say if they are good or not. The basic idea about the band on the run is a kind of prison escape. At the beginning of the album, the guy is stuck inside four walls, and eventually breaks out. There is a thread, but it's not a concept album."

Does the story apply to Wings escaping from The Beatles?

"Sort of – yeah. I think most bands on tour are on the run."

How much satisfaction has Wings given the couple since its inception?

"Got us on the road," said Linda. "Which is what it's all about."

"I wanted some way I could feel easy about appearing live again," explained Paul. "It was very difficult after The Beatles, because at the time they weren't interested in going live except on really big gigs. I was more interested in kinda playing smallish things, and getting near audiences again. It was like the pub-rock bit. It was selfish reasons, really, I just wanted to play live! But we got a good British tour out of it, and the second half of the European tour was good. And we loved the university tour we did because that was really down home. So we accomplished what we set out to do, and now we are putting Wings Mark II together."

"I miss it for sure," said Linda, "because I'd never done anything like that before."

"She's a real trouper now," nodded Paul.

Do Wings have plans for a Christmas single?

"No, not at the moment. We're just seeing how 'Helen Wheels' does. We might take something off the album. We like 'Helen', it's a good boogie-rocker, and seems to be doing quite well at the moment. I'd like to see it move a little more. I'd like to see them all move a little more!"

Why hasn't it done so well; is there any explanation for it?

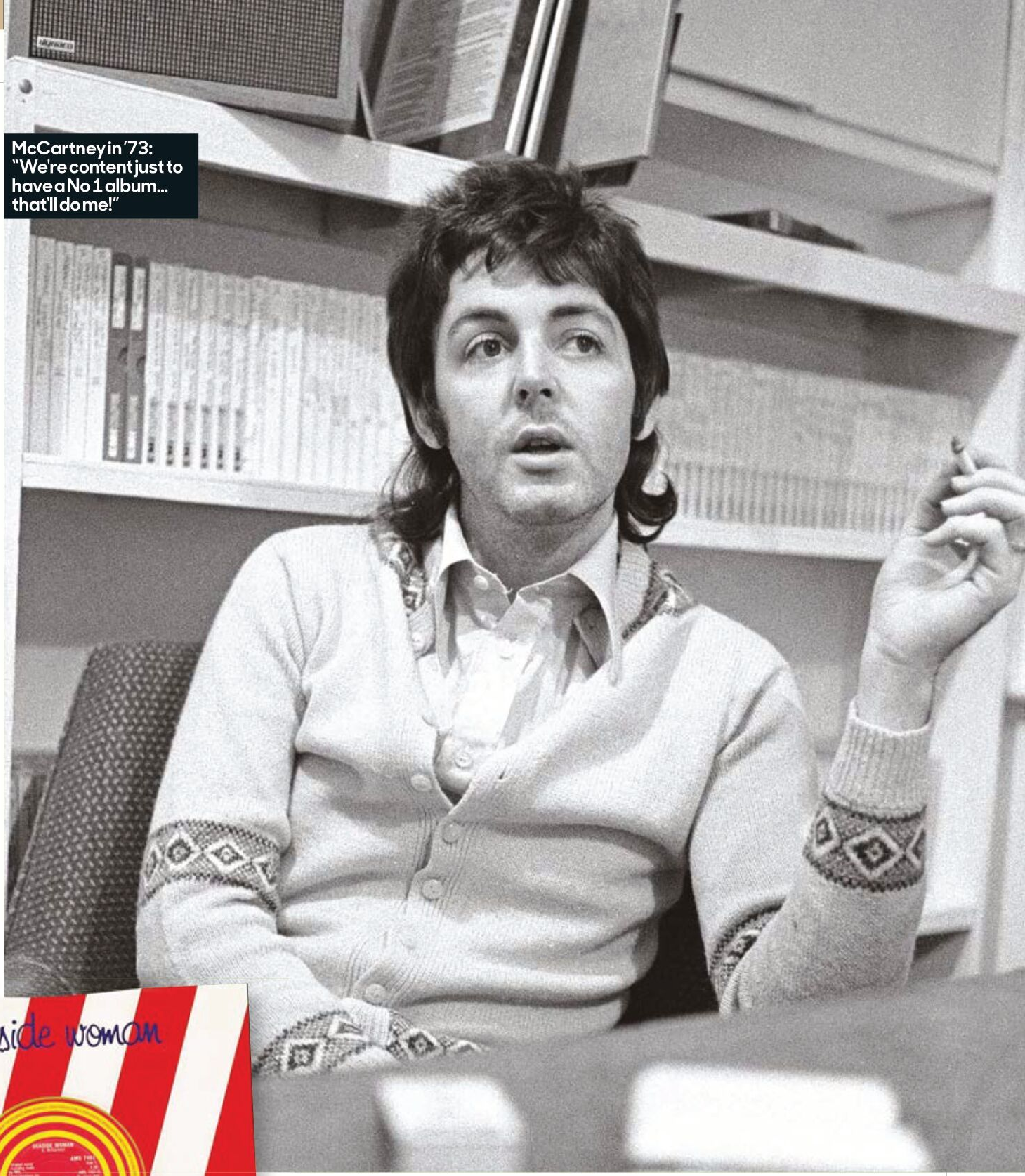
"Well, in America it's done well. In Britain? Dunno really. We don't have a policy on singles. We're a bit vague on all that. All we need is for someone to say, 'That'll make a good single,' and we bung it out. We're a bit haphazard. But they all seem to sell quite well. We've not had a great

Wings recording in London, November 21, 1973

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

big hit single in Britain for a while. The British market is a bit funny at the moment. I mean 'Eye Level' and next week Gary Glitter or Donny Osmond. It's quite a big teenybopper market.

"Yet Gary, and Dave Cassidy and the Osmonds don't do anything in America. And big acts here don't do well there. Bowie, for instance, doesn't do a lot in the States. So we're quite content at the moment just to have a No 1 album. That'll do me!"



McCartney in '73: "We're content just to have a No 1 album... that'll do me!"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

What kind of market is Wings aimed at?
"General – general market, really. We'll turn up at Butlin's holiday camps. Anywhere people want to listen to some music. We're not directed at any one audience."

Will Wings get heavier?
"I don't like the idea that we played 'gentle rock' as someone said. Don't really like that, and it's not what we're trying to do. Live – it comes on much more rockin'. When we get to do the records, it's been a little lightweight. I can't put my finger on it, we're just into stuff that we like, and it changes from time to time. One minute with me, I'm dead keen on ballads, and we were in a French club the other night and my favourite track played the whole night was Fred Astaire singing 'Cheek To Cheek'. Everybody in the club rocked like mad and we all had big beaming smiles. My musical tastes are vast, classical music, even Al Bowlly, and Pink Floyd in the same breath.

"The last concert we went to was Eric's at the Rainbow. I hope this thing comes off where he's going to play with a band again. That'll be the best thing for him. It'll make it all less precious. That's what I found in my case, anyway. You start off with all that 'We are coming to witness a legend' type thing, and it turns into 'We're coming to see a band', and it's much nicer.

Seaside woman
SUZY AND THE RED STRIPES

"By the time we did our British tour with Wings, it just felt like a working band. I do think Eric needs to play in public a lot more regularly, just to kind of ease up the pressure. He played fine at the Rainbow. But even that was a bit precious, when the compère came on and said: 'He's here!' Yes, we know he's here, we've come to see him.

"But we're just quietly looking around for a really nice guitarist, and drummer. I still don't know in my mind yet, exactly what I want. We went with Henry as I knew he was a good guitar player and that nearly worked out. Even if we keep chopping and changing, it doesn't worry me too much. It would be nice to have a steady band, 'cos the public like it, and like to get settled with a band. We were going to tour Australia in the New Year around January, but we've cancelled that, and we're looking around, but not desperately. We're not auditioning. We just took Jimmy McCulloch from Blue, who's rehearsing with Chris Stainton, and we did a couple of tracks with Jimmy in Paris. We're just playing with people to get the feel of what we want, and what they like.

"We had one track of Linda's which we tried to include in our albums, but it never seemed to fit. So what we're going to do is a bit like Derek And The Dominos. We're doing a thing with Linda, not like 'I am Linda McCartney, come and listen to me, I'm going to be a big star,' and all this big hype. That she doesn't want, and I don't fancy either 'cos it's too pompous. She's not ready for it, she's still an apprentice; which is cool, because she doesn't mind. It's the right position for her. So we're doing this thing called Suzy And The Red Stripes. And she is Suzy! Plus Jimmy McCulloch and myself and Denny Laine, are the Red Stripes. Red Stripe is a beer in Jamaica."

"I'd rather have a Red Stripe," sang Linda.

"It looks like we'll be doing an album from Suzy And The Red Stripes. So Linda will have an album, but not plugged hugely as Linda's album. We're not trying to hide the fact it's her; it'll be like Derek And The Dominos... a slight anonymity."

"I've written a few songs," said Linda, "so we'll put out an LP and have a bit of fun. The sessions were very relaxed and turned out great. We had one track that was supposed to be a B-side and it kept going for 11 minutes. No-one could stop."

There was a feeling abroad (and at home for that matter), that the rock scene had become too industrialised. Was there a movement, back to the roots, and casual simplicity?

"There's a feeling that it's industrialised," said Paul, grabbing a cigarette. "But it has got to be a big business, naturally, because there's so much money involved. In the days when a singer would be fobbed off with an E-type Jaguar for it all, as in the case of Jimi, then there's plenty of opportunity for... stealin'. And I think the rock scene has become much more intellectualised than ever it was. But with every movement in that direction, there's a counter movement, like the pub-rock bands. That counteracts the big deal.

"I know Eric Clapton had an idea of going out with just a caravan, setting up a tent and playing. And our university tour, when we just turned up and played, was very well received, although we weren't the greatest band when we did it. We were there playing and it wasn't a big deal, and nobody had to queue for hours. But then I wouldn't like to see the Stones play a pub in Streatham, because that would be ridiculous."

Paul began to recall the great days of the discothèques, when raving was the nightly routine and stars flocked together. Did he miss those days?

"I feel, yes, a lot of the community spirit in rock has gone, but it's changed. You meet people for dinner a bit more. We went out for dinner with Elton John the other night, and I see people around studios and they ring up. Rod Stewart asked me to do a song on what's supposed to be his last solo album... wink, I don't think it will be... but! So I did a song for him and apparently

it's really great, although I haven't heard the track yet. It's called 'Mine For Me'. It's a custom-made song for him. Those are the kind of ways you meet people now. You don't seem to meet anyone down at clubs, although if you happen to be at Tramp's on the right night you might see Gary Glitter, Rod Stewart, Keith Richard and myself, looning around. Or Mick – Mick'n'Bianca.

"Yes, so I just wrote a song for Rod when he rang up. He's cheeky, but a nice lad. And being a hack, I'll write a song for anyone. I always have seen myself as a hack. That's why I did the Bond theme; it only has to appeal for me, and I'll do it. I don't like to be 'a major influence on the music scene'. I don't believe that and it would be unsafe if ever I did.

"But I must say, I still love the scene. We were even thinking of opening a club. We stayed up one night in Scotland, and designed it and everything. It would have been a fantastic place. And I must say, hearing the discussion on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* the other night, about pub-rock, I thought everyone was wet, except the one with the fly-away collar from *Melody Maker*. He seemed to actually know what was going on. Kilburn And The High Roads were on and I got the feeling the cameras were putting them off and they hadn't been filmed a lot. The singer was trying to get it on despite the BBC film team and big lights.

"I imagine a lot of gutsy, raw music will come out of that scene. I'd like to have the freedom to play in a pub. I'd still like to play to, say, 56,000 people and then the next night – go play a pub. Obviously though, if you are big, you get into difficulties trying to play a small place. The one lousy thing with being 'big' is the feeling that you have to be big, no matter what. And of course – no-one's all big. I don't care if it's Jagger, Rod or Bowie. They've all got a pub-rock band inside them. And why else would Led Zeppelin wanna go and do the Marquee that time? Or David? Gigging is the whole trip."

BUT WHEN AN artist achieves fame and success, isn't there always the danger of a total reaction against the scene – of not wanting to do anything or speak to anybody? Didn't this happen to Paul?

"Well, immediately after the breakup of The Beatles, and not due to any of the other reasons, but just because a good band had broken up, I felt, what am I going to do? I needed at least a month to think a bit. I went into a period of what everyone called being a recluse, a hermit in isolation. All sorts of little snide articles appeared saying: 'He's sitting up in Scotland, looking into his mirror, admiring his image.' It was not at all true, I was just planting trees. Just getting normal again, and giving myself time to think."

Did you feel – abnormal?

"Yeah. I'm sure about the time Eric was being called God, I'm sure it got to him. You can't help it, you do have a reaction, like George Best, against the pressures, y'know what I mean? I never used to understand when they used to say, 'What are you going to do when the bubble bursts?' A joke question, and we always used to say, 'Ha, ha, we'll burst with it.' I never once took that question in. What did they mean, 'bubble burst?' And the pressures – what about the pressures? Whilst I could see there were pressures, I couldn't feel them. I was just a rocker, doing my business. But if something dramatic, like The Beatles breaking up, happens, that's when you can begin to feel pressures. I don't know if that's the problem with Eric, but he should just play and not give a damn. It doesn't matter anyway. Then you can start to come out with music and enjoy things. That's the way I feel now, so that's why I'm not sweating about turning Wings into an almighty supergroup. One chapter is finished now, we just want to take it easy, still do music, still play live."

Macca and Disney friends in 1973

Hasn't Paul now created his own environment, which he can control more than the old Beatle-Apple set-up?

"No, that's just journalese. We were always pretty in control as The Beatles. People used to say we were manipulated. We were never manipulated, I don't think. Maybe subtly, and certainly in the business sense because we just didn't know anything about business. Brian Epstein came to us once and said: 'I'm going to sell you to Bernard Delfont,' although he put it nicer than that.

"We said, 'Right man, if you do that, we'll never play another note. We'll just play 'God Save The Queen' on every record, and see how you like that.' That was an instance of attempted manipulation. That was a long time ago, about halfway through The Beatles. We were big and it was getting a bit too much for Brian. So he thought: 'I'll sell out,' and put us with a good pro agency, which they still are. But we didn't like the idea of being sold. Eventually we got Apple, and then gave it all away, as Roger Daltrey says."

Did Paul read Richard DiLello's *The Longest Cocktail Party*, about Apple?

"Yeah, but he didn't know. It's entertaining and good, and it's about what went on in the press office. In fact the book's almost about Derek Taylor really, because it's Derek's whole personality, that Apple office. 'Oh Paul can't make it. Tell 'em we'll give 'em Ringo.' Actually it was only half of the truth. In the other room, there was all other stuff going on. It's a long weird and involved story, and if anyone ever gets it down, it will be very interesting."

Is Paul completely in control of his own affairs now?

"Not completely, but beginning to be, and I advise anyone who's going to sign up with any agency to take a look if there's a possibility they can own it. Because there always is, and no-one ever knows it. Particularly with songs. If you write a good song, I maintain, you should own it totally. But no publisher will let you own the copyright. I'm always harping on about 'Yesterday', because it is a big song of mine, and probably the only big song I did on my own. Well, I don't own the copyright of that, that's been sold and lost in the mists of time. Lew Grade owns it. No fault of his, he's a good businessman and heard it was up for sale. But that's why I say to anyone new coming into the business, check it out with an accountant or lawyer.

"I'D ALWAYS TRUST rockers with my money, rather than sharks. George for instance, just gives a lot of it away because he actually has got morals. Whereas certain people tried to put the Bangladesh concert money straight into their pocket. For two years, none of The Beatles took anything out of Apple except business expenses. All the money had to go into the company.

"At least some of the newer ones are hip to all this, and I think Paul Simon owns 'Bridge Over Troubled Water', and that's fair enough. The old trick is to say, 'We'll set up your own company,' and they set one up that gives you small rights, and not knowing anything about companies, you think you have your own company, and they let you name it after yourself, you know Macca Productions or something, and you think of course, I've got my own little office, my own little secretary, but if you ever check into it, the actual money isn't coming your way, and you'll be getting like five per cent."

"I'D LIKE TO PLAY TO, SAY, 56,000 PEOPLE ONE NIGHT, THEN GO PLAY A PUB..."

Meanwhile Stella was growing impatient and bored with the *MM* conference room. She let out a petulant yell.

"Stop that!" warned Dad. "Do you want to go to bed? That's the ultimate deterrent, y'know?"

Paul, Linda and Stella decided it was time to end what had been a fascinating and surprising interview. But not before a tea lady had burst in, ostensibly looking for cups, but actually taking the opportunity to embrace the couple.

"Thanks for all the pleasure you've given us," she said.

"Well," smiled Paul through his last egg sandwich, "we must come and do this again."

CHRIS WELCH

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

RELEASE DATE
DECEMBER 7
1973

WINGS

BAND ON THE RUN

Picasso, Charlie Chester, Mrs Vandebilt, Dustin Hoffman, Fela Kuti, The Jailer Man, Sailor Sam – and a world-conquering classic. BY GARRY MULHOLLAND

DOWN THE YEARS, filmmakers and playwrights have shown a fondness for dramatising isolated incidents in the life of John Lennon. If anyone ever decides to do the same for Sir Paul McCartney, they should ignore the Beatles years and head straight for the second half of ’73. Hell, the album McCartney snatched from the jaws of endless disasters even lends the movie the perfect title.

To recap: an insane decision to record an album in Lagos, Nigeria, just five months after the release of *Red Rose Speedway*. Two band members (guitarist Henry McCulloch and drummer Denny Seiwell) bailing before Wings even get on the plane. A broken-down studio with a wonky desk and a battered eight-track. Paul and Linda mugged at knifepoint, losing the only tape of the new songs. Fela Kuti raging at McCartney for stealing African music, forcing him to play Kuti and entourage the early recordings to prove their lack of Afrobeat trappings. And Macca collapsing during a vocal take with a suspected heart attack, only to end up in hospital care after a bronchial spasm brought on by chain-smoking.

This is where we begin the heroic second act. At this point, any normal millionaire rock star would have written the whole Lagos misadventure off as a huge mistake and caught the first flight back to his safe European home. Instead, McCartney just went back to work. By mid-September, the three remaining Wings had laid down the backing tracks for a set that would not only be the biggest-selling British album of 1973-’74, but would instantly repair McCartney’s critical reputation.

"JET" IS THE KIND OF INSANE POP GENIUS THAT HACKS ARE NOT CAPABLE OF

The title track, opener and biggest hit single is undoubtedly the greatest symphonic pop song inspired by a dull business meeting. The ex-Beatles plus the requisite amount of lawyers and accountants are sitting in an office sifting through the financial debris of the Apple disaster. Macca is drifting away, wishing he was back in Scotland with his beloved Linda. An equally disgruntled Harrison begins a contribution: “If we ever get out of here…” From such an idle phrase, McCartney constructs a pop-opera in 13 parts, turning money men and former bandmates into fairytale villains via glowering horns, militaristic handclaps, country-rock whimsy, and an endless series of cunning musical twists and turns that elegantly represent escape from other people’s expectations.

The theme continues with “Mrs Vandebilt”, a superficially jolly twist on a chain-gang chant that uses an old song by comedian Charlie Chester as its starting point, *“Down in the jungle/Living in a tent/ You don’t use money/You don’t pay rent.”* But its *“Ho! Hey Ho!”* earworm hook and “why worry?” sentiments are tinged by an atypical nihilism. *“What’s the use of anything?”*, ask the Wings harmonies, the one clue to the darker side of McCartney’s post-Beatles exasperation.

Band On The Run’s highlights are the two songs that comprised one of the finest double A-sides in rock history. “Jet” and “Let Me Roll It”

Band on the Run

CRITICS' VERDICT

"*Band On The Run* comes as one of the best albums of '73 and, with the possible exception of Lennon's *Plastic Ono Band* album, the best solo performance of anybody who used to be in The Beatles."

CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY, NME, JANUARY 19, 1974

"The feeling expressed throughout is one of happy, almost exultant freedom, in which the music is open, unpressured and eminently satisfying. It epitomises what Wings are all about. They soar sunward and revel in light and warmth."

CHRIS WELCH, MELODY MAKER, DECEMBER 1, 1973

reached No 7 in the UK when twinned in spring 1974, and belie McCartney's insistence, when speaking to *Melody Maker*'s Chris Welch in December 1973, that he was "a hack" who didn't "like to be a major influence on the rock scene".

"Jet" is the kind of insane pop genius that hacks are not capable of. Reggae, Krautrock, glam, the thriller orchestras of "Live And Let Die" and some of the finest gibberish this side of Marc Bolan are forced to live side-by-side in epic pop heaven, reaching some kind of peak of irrational joy when McCartney sings the line, *"I thought the major/Was (uh-rur) a lady... SUFF(ah)RAGETTE!!!"* as if it is the single most sexy and dangerous piece of information that he's ever imparted to a bemused yet grateful audience.

"Let Me Roll It" is even better. Controversial because of its obvious debt to *Plastic Ono Band*-era Lennon (many wondered if it was some kind of coded fuck-you), its blend of doomy "Cold Turkey" riff, rockabilly slapback vocal echo, depth charge bass, doo-wop tempo and gospel chorus still sounds like one of the greatest records about the desperation of true love; a feeling as wracked with pain and vulnerability as it is comfort and joy. Macca rolls his heart to Linda like a wheel – and makes no attempt to take it back. You can't help wondering if this was what McCartney was singing when he clutched his heart and collapsed back in Lagos.

The winsome "Bluebird" and the tracks comprising the vinyl Side Two don't quite match up to this genius. "Picasso's Last Words (Drink To Me)", an answer to a songwriting task set by Dustin Hoffman, who thrust a copy of a *Time* magazine article about Picasso's death at McCartney and challenged him to write a song around it, and the closing, *Abbey Road*-esque "Nineteen Hundred And Eighty-Five" reprised snatches of "Band On The Run", "Jet" and "Mrs Vandebilt", because McCartney knew full well that these were the best tunes he'd written since, well, you know when.

The final act is McCartney's triumphant procession back to the toppermost of the poppermost, as *Band On The Run* kicked off Wings' imperial phase of huge hits and sell-out tours, transforming bad Beatle Paul into the future Sir Paul McCartney. Who knows? If he'd decided to play it safe and record *Band On The Run* in Woodstock or Wales, maybe the name Paul McCartney would still have to be prefaced with the phrase "former Beatle".

TRACKMARKS BAND ON THE RUN

1 Band On The Run ★★★★
2 Jet ★★★★★
3 Bluebird ★★★
4 Mrs Vandebilt ★★★★
5 Let Me Roll It ★★★★★
6 Mamunia ★★★
7 No Words ★★★
8 Picasso's Last Words (Drink To Me) ★★★
9 Nineteen Hundred And Eighty Five ★★★★

Label: Apple/EMI
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: EMI Studios, Lagos, Nigeria; Abbey Road, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (lead vocals, guitars, bass, drums, keyboards), Linda McCartney (keyboards, backing vocals), Denny Laine (guitars, bass, keyboards, backing vocals), Tony Visconti (brass and string arrangements), Remi Kabaka (percussion), Ginger Baker (percussion on "Picasso's Last Words"), Howie Casey (saxophone), Ian Horn (backing vocals on "No Words"), Trevor Jones (backing vocals on "No Words")
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 1

"I'm not as in control as I look!"

The "Heavy Trip" of being Macca. Involves John, George, Ringo and Allen Klein, The Osmonds vs Pink Floyd, and going "a bit Engelbert". "I've got no big hang-up about going down in history," he tells a disbelieving ***GEOFF BROWN***. "I really don't care."

Melody Maker
BAD COMPANY LIFT OFF!

TAKEN FROM
MELODY MAKER
30/11/1974

THE WEEK HAD been hectic for Paul and his new Wings. On the Monday, he'd shepherded Linda onstage at the Lewisham Odeon where they sang "Mine For Me" with Rod Stewart. "You can tell Chris Welch," he says later, "that I wasn't 'dancing ungainly'. I was pished!"

Later that week, there was a *Top Of The Pops* session, plugging their new hit single "Junior's Farm". Again, an off-the-cuff incident led to Wings hamming it up for a sprawling, one-line insert in David Essex's spot.

McCartney has new Wings and is ready to fly. This after what he calls "the hardest and worst three years of his life". Before he settles back into his chair to talk freely, willingly as ever, he cadges cigarettes. Never buys his own these days, he laughs: "After becoming a legend in my own time, you see. I just thought that last night, I better start buying them. People like Geoff Emerick are starting to suss it after the 50th pack." Emerick is The Beatles' and McCartney's engineer.

McCartney's prolific songwriting talent does not appear to have been dimmed by the extra-musical concerns of his life. The litigation, the pressure of keeping a new band together have affected him, but have not, apparently, touched his creative nerve.

"Mine For Me", as a topical example. He can't remember writing it nor the circumstances of the suggestion. "Just the result of another drunken night, I suppose. It's nice to write for someone like Rod 'cos he's got such a distinctive voice, you can hear him singing it as you're doing it. But certain people... well, they're just a bit boring and you write a boring song for them."

Of his own work, Wings' next album is underway. Three tracks are complete, but of one other he's unsure. The result of 10 days' work. The "unsure" one? "It's an attempt at a kind of rocking thing. The type that you've got to get right. I don't like this when I keep attempting rock things you get, 'That's another nice soft rock from Paul... another nice light rocker.'" (This

"MOST OF THE PRESSURE I'VE HAD HAS COME IN THE PAST THREE YEARS"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

Wings Mk II in 1974: "We don't know if we are any good as a band, really..." ***(l–r)*** **Paul, Linda, Jimmy McCulloch, Denny Laine and Geoff Britton**

he says with clipped upper-class accent). “I don't like all that.”

Hence “Let Me Roll It”? “Yeah, probably. In fact, if the truth be known, in my own little subconscious, I got way too into all this, ‘trying to prove I can rock’ over the last couple of years… it's a question of what you do. Anyway, I don't knock it. I do love all the kind of ballad stuff myself. I hate it when it becomes schmaltzy, but I do love all the kind of romantic stuff myself,” He smiles. “I like all those ‘Here, There And Everywheres’.”

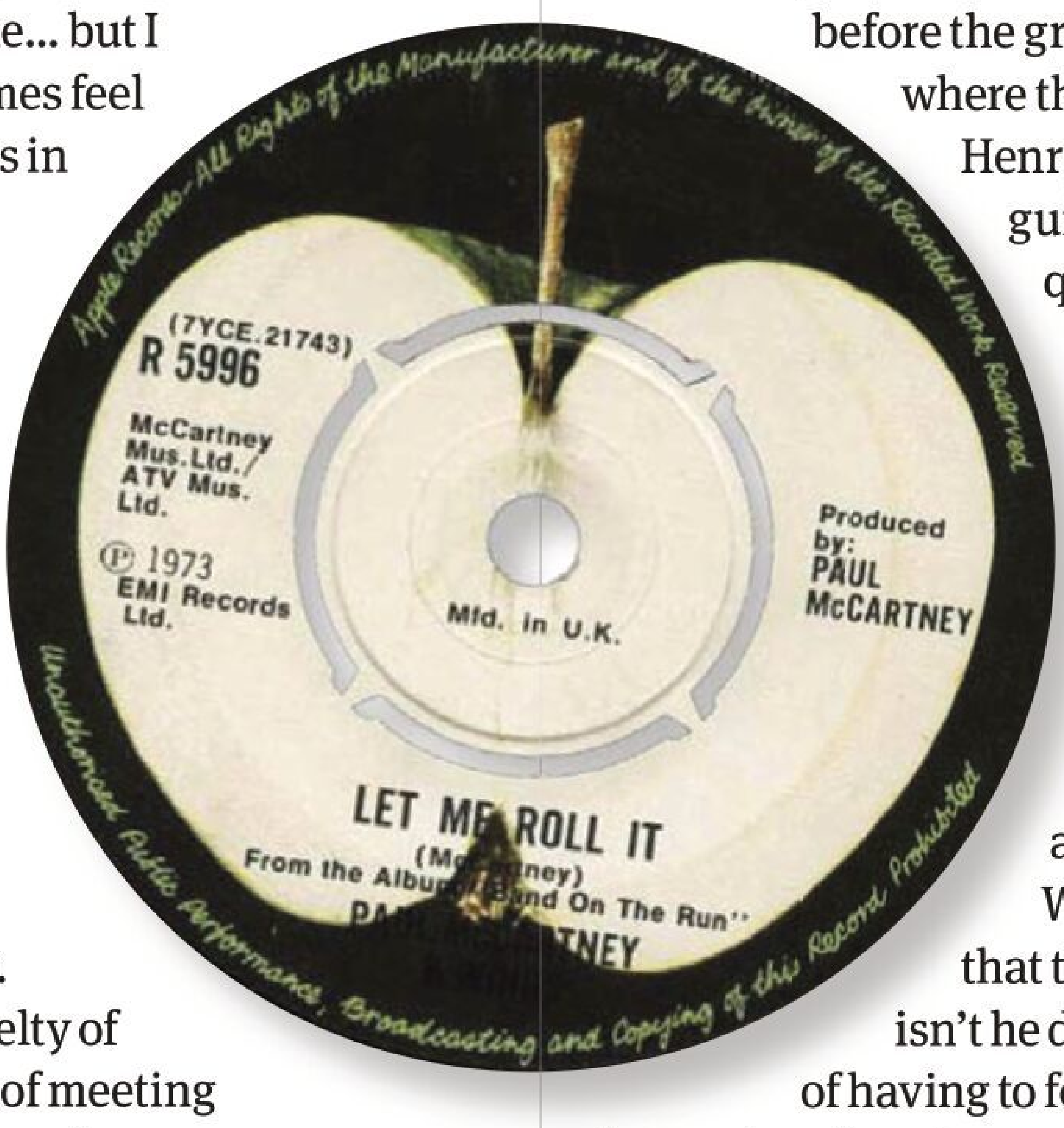
“I think what did it was, I got knocked a couple of years back. A lot of people were saying, ‘Oh well, he's a bit Engelbert.’ In fact, it wasn't a lot of people but a few! He said this kinda bit that I was a load of Engelbert and I thought, ‘Cheeky sod! Who's he kiddin'? I can rock better than 'im at the best of times.’ So I then embarked on trying to do something with a couple of good rock numbers. But I never thought ‘Let Me Roll It’ was like John when I did it. I can hear that now, though.”

Remembering, of course, that McCartney was ever the frantic screamer yelling through “Long Tall Sally”, looking about to burst a vein. To rehearse and personally acquaint the survivors of the old Wings band – Paul, Linda and Denny Laine – with the new – Geoff Britton and Jimmy McCulloch – McCartney took them to Nashville.

“In a way it's the musical capital of the world. But when you ask them, they say, ‘London.’ But I know London and where's all the music scene? One or two big gigs maybe, but you don't have millions of fiddlers straining at the leashes trying to play sessions. And there, there are. Every bar you go in has someone on a guitar. It's real. And it's very much where Elvis is out of, except he's Memphis, but it's the same thing, really. It's like Liverpool and Manchester. Not all the same thing, but the same feel.

“For me, it's all getting a little bit bastardised now. They still play the music, but it's not how you'd imagine it to be. So we went to the Old Opry, just as tourists. Stood on the steps having photos taken and someone took us inside.”

Talking to people in Nashville, says McCartney, he got the impression that “they were building up a case to close the Old Opry down, which is stupid. “It's like London going skyscraper and all the Yanks are coming here 'cos it's not skyscraper. It's silly to me… but I don't know, you sometimes feel you're digging your heels in and are perhaps behind the times. It's like the Common Market. Now for some reason, I just happen to think the Common Market's a stupid idea. I think I'd like the Opry as it was in the slaggy old days.”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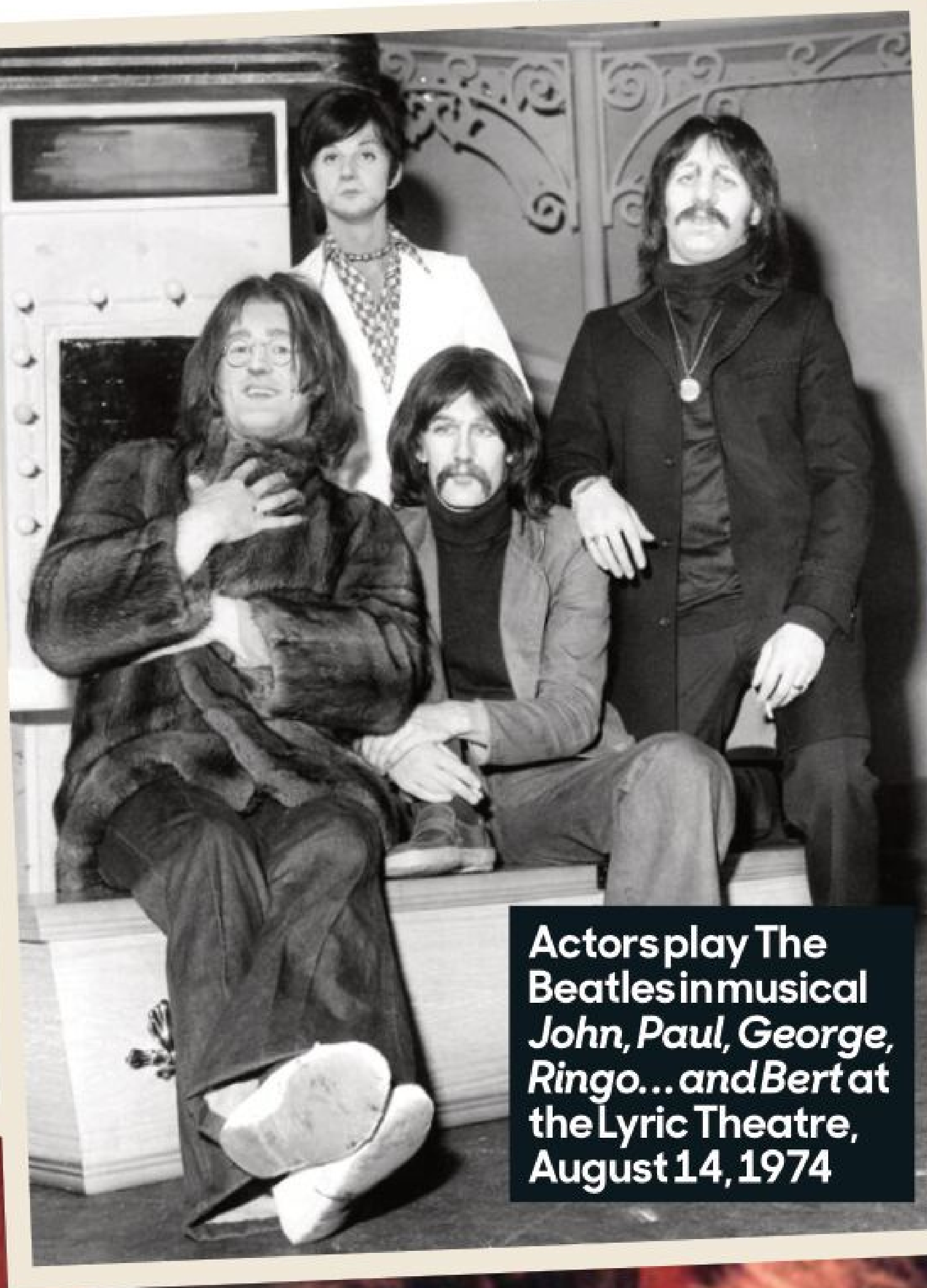
LET ME ROLL IT
(McCartney)
From the Album "Band On The Run"

Did this feeling relate to Paul himself? “Yeah. Only one thing, actually. Just the fact that the novelty of everything. The novelty of meeting a guy like you then was much more impressive than it is now. I know you're just a fella now. That novelty has to have worn out. You can't go buzzing around for 15 years and not suss it out. That thrill, it… it's like trying to get back last summer.”

But the thrill of gigging, says Paul, remains. “Gigging is now as exciting as it ever was. That's different. That's something I haven't done for a long time. Now it's like a blank canvas.”

Recording? “It's getting much better 'cos I reckon I've made some bum records in the last couple of years… er, not bum records. I won't go saying that, 'cos I like 'em and they're all OK, but the things I've been through in the last few years aren't very conducive to inspiration. It knocks you on the head. Anyone who's had their job knocked from underneath them'll know it's not that easy to take.”


Actors play The Beatles in musical *John, Paul, George, Ringo… and Bert* at the Lyric Theatre, August 14, 1974

Somehow, The Beatles' demise being seen simply as four guys out of work is a hard concept to grasp.

“You smile through it and that, but it knocks you. I reckon that kinda got into the music a bit. The thing is, *Band On The Run* was almost the last straw.”

Denny Seiwell, Wings' drummer, left just before the group flew out to Lagos where the album was to be cut. Henry McCullough, their guitarist, had also quit the band a few weeks previously.

“We ended up there… tropical rainstorms. ‘Oh Jesus,’ I thought, ‘This is it, either we go under here or we make a good album.’ And I think we made a good 'un.”

World sales indicate that the public agrees. But isn't he daunted by the prospect of having to follow and, indeed, better the album?

“No I'm happy about following it up. I've got better numbers than I had on *Band On The Run*. I'm not worried about that. I remember John saying to me about George's record, *All Things Must Pass*. He's the hip boy. He said, ‘Still… he's gotta follow it up. Hehehehe!’

“No. I'm happy about it. I'm getting into recording now. I didn't like it for a while. Got well fed up. It's always the same question. You've gotta keep your head. Lose your head and you'll lose enjoyment and your faith in it.”

Loss of inspiration and direction is a crisis one would never associate with Paul, ever the sensible, self-assured stable head in The Beatles. At least that was the image.

“Yeah, I have that air about me, but I'm as absolutely uncontrolled as the average bloke. You wanna see me at home. I'm not as in control as I look, but for some reason I always wanted to be that way. I mean in the John, Paul, George and Ringo thing,” (the musical, and let us not forget Bert, who is everyone). “I haven't seen it but I certainly appear to come out as the one saying, ‘No, no, don't do Klein and don't do this,’ and I think in that way I did have a good idea of what was going on there, 'cos no-one seemed to spot the Klein thing and there was me left in a big bad situation. In fact, I'd like to say that Willy Russell in his George, and Bert and thingy thing, he's got me saying, ‘I'm leaving, I'm leaving the group,’ and the rest of the group saying, ‘Oh no… come on, Paulie, it's The Group, let's stick together.’ In fact, that's physically wrong.

“I was actually the last to leave the group. Just that little thing I'm kinda keen on.”

The situation with Allen Klein and ABKCO is one of the touchiest areas of an extremely tender (in the sore sense) story. What, for instance, first forewarned McCartney? “I tell you the very first thing that made me suspicious about him was meeting him, 'cos he's a bit of a boy. But I thought, ‘OK’ and I treated it ordinary. It was nine o'clock and we'd been meeting all day, so I said, ‘I think I'll go home now to Linda,’ and everyone

Never a dull moment: backstage with Rod at the Lewisham Odeon before a Faces gig, November 18, 1974

GRAHAM WILTSHIRE/REDFERNS, CENTRAL PRESS/GETTY IMAGES

In the pink: Macca performing "Gotta Sing Gotta Dance" on the *James Paul McCartney* TV special in 1973

REX FEATURES/ITV

said, 'Oh no, man, how can you be so uncool... meeting this great guy and you're going home.' I thought, he's a businessman and you don't do business past nine o'clock at night, do you?"

The crunch for McCartney came when discussing percentages. "I thought, we're big stars now and Brian Epstein asked 20 per cent in the beginning and I even argued with him then. I said, 'Twenty, man, I thought managers only took 10 per cent.' He said, 'No, it's 20 these days,' and I said, 'OK, maybe I'm not very modern.' But we were pretty unknown in those days."

Klein, says Paul, asked for the same. McCartney said five. "I said to the others (he mimics the secret conversation, talking from the corner of his mouth), 'He'll do it for five, we're big boys now...', well, I thought we'd had a bit of success, little album called *Abbey Road* didn't do too bad."

Writs notwithstanding, McCartney says that there'd be the three Beatles, Klein (who'd claimed erroneously, says Paul, that McCartney has agreed to a 40 per cent deal) and Macka himself.

"And I'd be saying, 'Listen, Allen, you said that that was gonna happen. Where is it it now?" (He switches to a New York accent) "'Oh well, we can't do it today. That was two weeks ago. We could do it then.'

"I think they were using this whole Eastman-Klein bit and playing me off against the others. I put the Eastmans up. I thought they'd be fair. For one thing, they're lawyers, they don't take percentages, they take a fee. So they manage you and at the end of the year they put in a bill. And if you don't like 'em, you don't pay the bill... well, you pay the bill, but you sack them for the next year."

Last year, Paul did a TV special – *James Paul McCartney*. There was talk at one time of another called 'The One-Hand Clapping Show'.

"I like TV just for one reason – everyone watches it. It's like a record. Like you've got records, live gigs then TV. And in fact, if you wish to, you can put it all the other way round so you've got TV, live gigs, then records like a lot of bands do nowadays. I don't see it like that. My taste is records, and live, and TV about the same, although I enjoy live gigs more."

Wings have done "a little thing. The first one was a big Lew Grade spectacular, which was nice to do. It got us around but it was a little bit too... what? ...showbiz, or something. Just wasn't quite rocking enough and, again, it was from a not too healthy period for me. A certain type of people liked it and a certain type hated it. The more critical musical people didn't like it 'cos they thought it was a cop-out. But lots of younger people and the more ordinary people just loved it. Y'know, 'Nice ta see yer on't telly!'

"I DON'T MIND GOING ON *TOP OF THE POPS*. IT'S THE ONLY ROCK SHOW ON TELLY"

"But I'd like to do more. Television's never used rock music well, that's where it's at. Everybody I've ever met in TV, except maybe three people – and even then you can make out a case against them from what I'm going to say – seem to hate rock, and rock'n'rollers. They never seem to know what to do with it.

"They never want to put you there (framing head) and another there on your guitar. I mean if Keith Richards is on there, I wanna see his head and his guitar and his fingers. I wanna see what he's doing, y'know?

"They don't think it's exciting enough! They don't! They never have! So I get the idea they always wanna dress it. We've just done a thing at EMI where we just went in front of cameras and played. It was originally just so that we could look at it and see if we're any good as a band. 'Cos we don't know, really.

"You feel that it's OK and sometimes it goes great, but it's nice to just see if it looks any good. There's no dressing. It's straight, just us in the studio and I think that could be really great."

He's also got something he recorded with Wings Mark I, which could end life as a kiddies' programme. "Actually, it's funny. It depends on your mood, like anything. Stephen Stills came round to see it and he was, 'Yeah, man, yeah'... Mind you, we were having a great evening. He probably would've enjoyed Mickey Mouse!"

But Stills dug it and thought it was nice for an adult show "so we'll do it as a kids' show, but do enough publicity so that adults can look in, too."

Another project mooted in recent weeks was an album called 'Cold Cuts'. That's still in the pipeline, says Paul, and will consist of old material.

"We've still got a couple of little tunes from *Ram*, which I did. It's like the *Odds & Sods* idea" (compilation of early Who and Pete Townshend esoterica) "only it's a bit more 'studio' than that. We've done songs like the old Thomas Wayne song 'Tragedy' with the old Wings. We were hoping to do it, particularly in England, as a kind of budget album. Gotta be careful about the budget album because to some people in

America they think you're not selling well because you've got your price down. I think you actually have got to think about that.

"So probably what we're gonna end up doing is call it 'Hot Hills And Cold Cuts', and instead of padding out the hits there'll be singles that didn't get on albums, certain kind of hit tracks and all these others to fill it. And they're not bad.

"I'd like to do it as a cheapie. But in the States... like when I said I'd like to do a budget album they said, 'You're so hot, what for?' I said, 'For the people'... 'Nah man, fuck the people, they can afford it.'"

He leans to the tape recorder. "Those aren't my advisors by the way. Mine are nicer." Ever the diplomat.

"But there's some nice tracks. One called 'Momma's Little Girls'. I do a nice little vocal on it. Backed by me kid. Anyone who's got a daughter'll love that. And we got a song of Denny's, 'I Don't Want To Smile', a nice song but never got on an album.

"But we don't wanna push it as a big, big, big thing. I like the idea of Jonathan King of whipping out odd little records and if you don't like 'em, you don't like 'em. I don't like saying this is 'us', 'cos people go saying, 'Oh they had a great record called *Band On The Run*, and now look at this. This is rubbish."

We'd been talking about his new band. About Jimmy McCulloch, especially, whose behaviour had been wayward in the past but "he's levelling out now. He's much straighter now, I think." McCartney looks at the floor, head on one side. "He'll probably go out and get wrecked tonight and arrested and prove me wrong. I think he realises you can't be that untogether in this business. You end up like a few of the people you can remember who died a few years back, just because they're not quite in control.

"I mean it's a Heavy Trip... it gets to you occasionally and that's when you've just gotta learn to do it within yourself."

"THE THING IS, *BAND ON THE RUN* WAS ALMOST THE LAST STRAW..."

He sounds as though he's speaking from experience?

"Yeah. Quite often. More so in recent years. I was never a big anything. But most of the pressure I've ever had has come in the past three years of my life.

"I've never been as pressured as I was towards the end of The Beatles. I mean, even before Klein, we were beginning to kind of not get on too well as people. Then the Klein thing, then all the bit of setting up Wings and Beatles dissolving and all this stuff. But the nice thing with me, my constitution, is that if I overdo it, it gets me back. Some people have got stomachs of stone and can carry on and kill themselves with it. But I'll have a wild night out and I'll guarantee you, I'll go home and be furiously ill. So I've got a nice little valve there.

"I don't like to get too heavily into anything. Gets you in the end."

Yet he was the first of The Beatles to experiment with drugs.

"It's the old story. It doesn't really get you off. Might get you off one evening, but you can't sustain it."

The day previously, Wings had taped "Junior's Farm" for *Top Of The Pops*. He'd last done "My Love" and hadn't liked it too much. Now "I just feel easier about it all.

"I don't mind going on *Top Of The Pops*. It's just the old rock... well, it's the only bleedin' rock show on telly, you know, so I'll go on it. It's not really a rock show but at least it's not *World Of Sport*!"

Of the current chart records, Paul prefers "the American soul stuff... 'Let's Put It all Together'. I like the Osmonds single. This won't make me popular with the heavies, but I really liked that 'Love Me For A Reason'." (Well, it was arranged, produced and written by soul men Johnny Bristol and H B Barnum, so that's permitted. It's cool). "And I liked them on *Top Of The Pops*, too. All straight to the camera. I'm a sucker for all that. It's only like Sha Na Na, the same thing, only with a cleaner group. I can get into it.

"The other reason I can get off on it, is because I've got kids and kids keep you straight up and all that. Kids see something. I mean Mary was watching Donny Osmond once and she said, 'He loves me, doesn't he?' It's funny to see that, isn't it? I didn't dare break her heart and tell her the truth. But I see it through their eyes. I was once watching *The Black And White Minstrel Show* and not a word of a lie, I enjoyed it! That night I happened to be watching it with an old fellah. A relative from Liverpool and he was just getting so off on it that I started watching it through his eyes. He was goin', 'Ooh that's a great song. Ooh!' It was taking him back and I go back quite a way because me dad used to do all the old songs so I knew 'em. And, like I say, I'd never seen the Black And White Minstrels before, and I enjoyed it. I always switched them off. But it was just songs and dressed up in funny costumes. That's all they want."

But for himself he'd play *The Dark Side Of The Moon* rather than a Donny Osmond album. "I play Stevie Wonder rather than Slade and they probably do, too. Yeah. I mean there just is such a thing as Good Original Music. But I never closet myself off into a little corner and there's nothing else. Obviously kids aged eight aren't going to be able to understand where *The Dark Side Of The Moon* is coming from. Me, I understand and associate with it totally. I think, 'Yeah, they've put that down totally.' The black soul thing's still the top thing for me, really."

He never plays his old records. Never. He plays reggae, though. "It's all black, most of the stuff I play. That's black funk... I'm not that struck on James Brown."

OUTSIDE WINGS, McCARTNEY has made inroads into movie scores (most notably the James Bond *Live And Let Die* film). There are plans for more – most advanced being one with Joseph Strick.

PAUL McCARTNEY
& WINGS
JUNIOR'S FARM
SALLY G.
stereo

"Television's never used rock music well..." Wings live on BBC TV, 1973

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS

Wings with a few of their gold (and triple-platinum!) discs for *Band On The Run*, 1973

He liked doing the Bond movie. “And I liked not being able to get in the cinema in Jamaica because it was sold out. You know, ‘But I wrote the bloody tune.’ ‘No. No use, man. Get out.’” Another flurry of vocal impressions.

“A lot of people came into the business as rock’n’rollers, but I have the feeling that I originally came in almost on the wave of, going right back, Billy Cotton. And just the idea of being the Professional Musician. Being in one like ‘in’ jokes, like in *Some Like It Hot*. Because remember, I did a lot of tracks like ‘Till There Was You’, ‘Yesterday’, ‘Here, There And Everywhere’, did a lot of those tracks and in a way, for me, I feel I was trying to impress musicians and not just necessarily rocky rolly. I was coming into it as A Musician. Trying to train up as a great guy, who knew how to arrange and knew songs.

“So when I asked to do the films, I liked that as a writer. I like to hear that Bach wrote his stuff just because he was asked to for a certain church and he just spent all his life doing little numbers for the church down the road and for a guy at church. I mean he was a ‘hack’ writer” (he meant that in the true sense of the word as a type of journeyman) “so I like to have a go occasionally just to see if I can do it. And I’m not too worried about me reputation.”

He says that recently he did a commercial for bread. “People said, ‘Oh, that’s a shame, what d’you do that for?’ But I had to write a 30-second piece of music, which is something I’d never attempted before. It’s hard. It’s like trying to write a rocker. It seems to be the simplest thing out, in fact it’s quite hard. Normally a verse will take 30 seconds. So it’s a great little task.

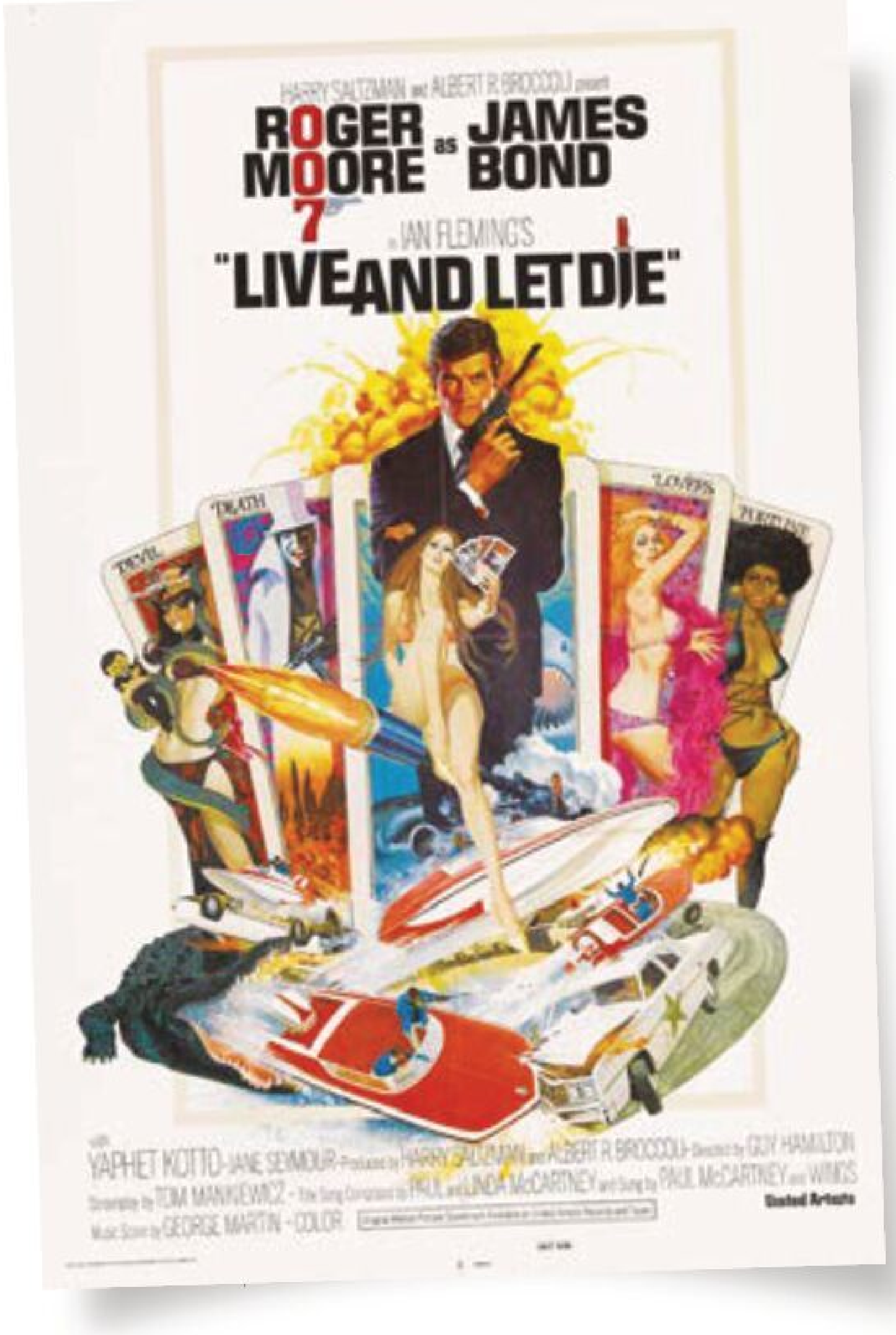
“I like writing all those little things, though. Frivolous things. Sometimes I think, ‘Hang on, yer diluting yer talent.’ And maybe I should be writing one great song and not 50 jokes. But I like to do it. I’m not that concerned with ‘my talent’. I reckon I can write songs OK, but I’m not that worried about it. I’ve got no big hang-up about going down in history. I really don’t care.”

But it’s surely inevitable that he will?

“Probably.”

He’s heard Elton John’s version of “Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds”? “Yes, It’s OK, but I prefer the original. I mean I don’t knock it as I helped write it. It’s all grist to the mill.”

Lennon’s *Walls And Bridges* he thinks is “great, but he can do better. It’s a very good, great album, but I know he can do better. I heard ‘I Am The Walrus’ today for instance, and that’s what I mean. I know he can do better than *Walls And Bridges*. I reckon ‘Walrus’ is better, it’s more adventurous, it’s more exciting.”



Ringo’s stuff he also likes. “It’s nice to see everyone doing it. It’s nice to see it hasn’t affected everyone’s head so badly that they can’t get it on. I think the others are great now. I’d always stick up for ’em. I think they’re great guys, great musicians. I don’t agree with George. I don’t think The Beatles weren’t any good. I think they were great. I think he’s well wrong on that.

“I think he’s been taken out of context, that remark. Willie Weeks, I reckon, is a better bass player than me.” (Harrison had said as much, adding that he’d not care to play with McCartney on bass again). “I don’t like to say that. It doesn’t make me very happy to say that, but he’s got all the finger technique off and all that.

“But still I think The Beatles even had a better thing. I think we had more of an excitement, more of a kind of joy. That was what people picked up on. The whole kind of buzz of it, always coming out with a different record from the last one. Up to a point, all the records had a great ‘newness’ about them. I mean, it wasn’t frantically new, actually. There was always some other act, some other group doing something a bit similar.”

He talks about Floyd’s “Echoes” and Lennon’s “Across The Universe” and certain lyrical likenesses. “I just thought John might’ve nicked off them or they nicked off him... We used to nick a lot of stuff... especially Miracles, early Motown. Those kind of records, because nobody had heard of them at the time. Only people, groups in the business, like the Stones.

“A lot of the groups even hadn’t heard them. Just a few hip groups. And the Stones and us always used to have a quick wink about who’d nicked what. I don’t nick as much as I used to. I’ve gone clean.”

GEOFF BROWN

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

NGS
uction
PAUL
Take it fel
Love

"With an album you're allowed to do anything": Paul and Linda in the mid-'70s

"I like to have hits, definitely. That's what I'm making records for"

In the Soho home of McCartney Productions, the irrepressibly ambitious Wings frontman expounds on *Venus And Mars*, the pursuit of soul, and how it's not about "the bread – though I like that too." *CHRIS WELCH* gets the lowdown, as well, about Macca's dream project: a musical based on the "far out and psychedelic" Rupert The Bear…

Melody Maker
SINATRA CRAZY!

TAKEN FROM MELODY MAKER 31/05/1975

WINGS FLEW OVER Soho this week. But these were of musical origin and did not belong to the rather grubby pigeons that haunt London's home of strip clubs and Chinese restaurants. Jimmy McCulloch, Denny Laine, Joe English and the founder members, Paul and Linda McCartney, were gathered to drink a little wine, bang about on the upright piano and talk to whoever happened to be passing through the discreet, unpretentious home of McCartney Productions.

The offices are a far cry from the fabled splendours of Apple a few blocks away, just recently closed, and eliciting barely a reaction from Paul beyond: "It had to happen." He was more concerned with the release of the new Wings album *Venus And Mars*, although he was happy to chat about a whole range of subjects, when we finally settled in a back room, away from the hubbub of a minor reception.

The album has already been hailed as a worthy successor to the remarkably productive and successful *Band On The Run*, and it seems that Wings have finally settled down into a workmanlike team. There have been personnel changes, but the purpose remains the same. Paul doesn't want to be tied down, but at the same time wants to make Wings work. There is even wild talk of a British tour, maybe sometime towards the end of the year, and the group are currently rehearsing material for a show.

They had been busy recording in New Orleans, and Paul, as frank, open and gently biting as ever, pondered my suppositions and suggestions, and anticipated the kind of discussion that will inevitably surround the new songs.

> "IN A FUNNY WAY, THE DOWNERS OF RECENT YEARS KIND OF HELPED"

Was environment important to Paul's songwriting and recording output?

"I think it always rubs off a bit, just in kind of arrangements and who's there. There's a couple of tunes we've got brass on and it's New Orleans brass. If you were American and lived in London, you'd start to pick up bits of this and that. You can't help it. But the album doesn't sound very New Orleansy to me. I couldn't tell you. It's just your opinion. Everybody says something different about every track anyway. We just wanted to record in America and find a musical city. There's not that many. Only New York, Nashville, and LA and I'd never been to New Orleans, except on tour when we never saw anything except the inside of a trailer. The only thing I remembered about New Orleans was the

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

vibrator bed in the motel. And it was sweating hot. So we went down to New Orleans in search of a musical town and the weather. And then we found out Mardi Gras was on while we were there. I'd written most of the stuff before we got there, and Jimmy had written one of the tracks with a mate of his.

"We'd been in Jamaica before we went to New Orleans, and for the first time ever I'd got all the songs together. I wrote it all out and stuck it all together like a scroll that went from here to the end of the room. So I had all that together and we just turned up and started recording."

Did the album have a link running through it like *Band On The Run* had?

"I feel it has something like that, yeah."

Did you feel that following up a hit LP like *Band On The Run* was going to be difficult?

[His voice slowed to a lazy Liverpool drawl, with just a hint of sarcasm] "Yeah, once or twice I thought, yeah, gotta follow that, then. But y'know, it doesn't worry me."

Did he feel there was a timetable to be adhered to, pressing commitments to be fulfilled?

"No, I just thought I'd do a new LP… I had this bunch of songs on me scroll and I thought it would be better than *Band On The Run*. Yes, I think it's better, but that's down to who likes it and stuff. With the previous LP, as you know, a couple of the lads left just before we started, and I felt this has got to work, or it'll be ludicrous. There were only three of us and we had to get down to work. That became a challenge. I was looking to do an LP that people would like, and not say: 'Do I like it or not, I'm not sure, oh I like him when he does that.' I wanted an LP that would sell!"

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Produced by: PAUL McCARTNEY
An E.M.I. Recording
45 r.p.m.
(7.2.75)
A
SALLY G
(McCartney)
PAUL McCARTNEY AND WINGS

Was he at all surprised at its success and that so many hit singles came out of it?

"Well, I wasn't going to do any of that. I was going to keep a low profile, keep really cool and just release the album. Then the fellow rang me up and said: 'Look we've got to take a single off this.' This is the guy from Capitol, who's a real sharp shooter. So he suggested taking one single off and it kind of crept into the chart, so it looked like a good idea. Normally I wouldn't like to do that because people think you're milking the album. But if you don't take a few tracks off the album, then a lot of people won't even know that it's out.

"Maybe housewives will really like it. And if Jimmy Young doesn't say that it's out, how will they ever know? That was the whole point about 'Sally G'. We flipped that and I thought it might seem we're trying to fool the public. But it isn't, it's only to get a bit of exposure on that song. Otherwise it just dies a death, and only the people who bought 'Junior's' get to hear 'Sally G'. I like to have hits, definitely. That's what I'm making records for. It's not for the bread, although I like that too, it's just that if you do something in my particular field, you want people to hear it.

"It's like doing a cover for *Vogue* and nobody buys *Vogue* that week. The photographer who took the picture would feel, well, brought down. And if you're working towards an audience, you don't like to feel they've all left the theatre. So anything I do, I like it to be a hit."

Are there any songs that have flopped and not gone the way that Paul might have liked?

"Oh yeah, a couple, quite a few. I can't think which, just some that didn't do as well. As long as you're making a few good songs occasionally, and you're working and digging it, that's it, isn't it? With an album you're allowed to do anything, and all I do is write a few tunes, and a few sound like good tunes. If I've written five ballads, then I'd do something a bit more funky. I mainly think, OK, so I'll do a new album now, I've got a blank canvas and I can do anything I like. And I just start writing tunes.

"With this new LP, I did this scroll thing and sat down and put one song there, another song here. Fiddle about, fiddle about. The only time I've done this before was on the mini-opera thing on *Abbey Road*, the only time I've sat down with four sheets of paper and put them in order."

Does *Venus And Mars* have astrological or astronomical significance?

"It's really a total fluke. I was just sitting down and started singing *anything* and some words came out. And I got this whole idea… well, the bit on the second side came first… and I got this idea about a fellow sitting in a cathedral waiting for this transport from space that was going to pick him up and take him on a trip. The guy is a bit blotto and he starts thinking about *'A good friend of mine studies the stars, Venus and Mars are all right tonight'*.

"And the next bit was *'Your ruling star is in ascendancy today'*, but *'Venus and Mars are all right'* was better, it flipped off the tongue. I thought, well, I know Venus and Mars are planets, so I can't go wrong there.

"But afterwards, somebody said to me, did I know that Venus and Mars are our closest neighbours, and I said, wow, you live and learn. And then somebody told me Venus and Mars have just eclipsed the sun, or something. I'm not exactly sure, you'll have to check up with Patrick Moore. But they did something and aligned themselves exactly for the first time in 2,000 years. I swear I had no idea about all this going on. It was just stuff that happened afterwards."

Do people accept Paul on a more rational level now, less of an idol?

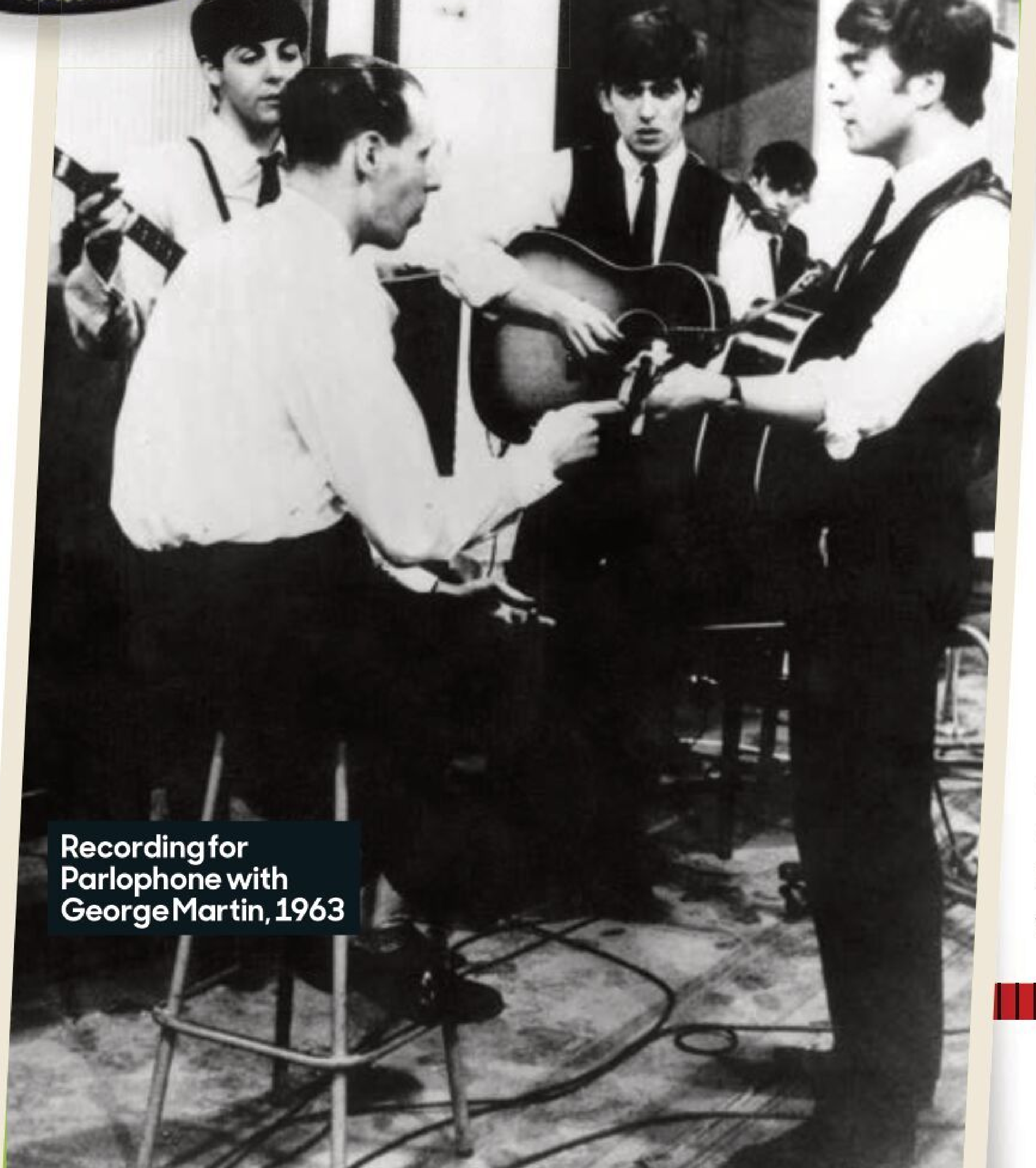
"I don't know how people accept me. I only know the people I see. The impression I get off people is sort of… average. In a funny way the downers of the recent years, having to fight so much business stuff, and wondering whether it was right to fight a business manager, in a funny way it's kind of helped. I don't think it screwed up my writing, although there might have been times when my time was taken up more with business things. But it gave me more of a challenge."

Paul began to reminisce unexpectedly about the earliest Beatle days, the happier period perhaps expunging the sour aftermath. "Do you know on the early Beatle records, I never noticed they didn't have a real bass and drums sound? It wasn't until much later when the bass sound came into its own…"

Sly And The Family Stone? I hazarded.

"*Sgt Pepper* even, thank you very much. But when you listen to an old Beatles record now, although it's a dated sound, back to 'Please Please Me' and 'Twist And Shout', there's John singing as ballsy as you like, and that's nice. It may not have had a 'sound' but it had something. Nobody thought about bass and drum sounds.

"Those first sessions are totally in a blur. All I remember was the pub afterwards, because I was so nervous. I remember the Decca audition, though. Tony Meehan was there and he was going to produce us, and there was a little bit of dubiousness. We couldn't get the numbers right and we couldn't get in tune. But eventually we did these records. The first LP we did was at 10 o'clock in the morning, just after a night out. We played the stage act right through, and then went home. I think we sat around and talked about it for an



Recording for Parlophone with George Martin, 1963

KEYSTONE/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Wings in '75: "We went down to New Orleans in search of a musical town"

LISTEN TO WHAT THE MAN SAID
Wings

hour. But we did 14 tracks and went home, and they just mixed it. They'd ring us in a couple of weeks, and we'd say, is our record ready yet? It was like putting a film into the chemist's [*Linda laughs*]. But obviously, as things began to develop, it was like the workers taking over the means of production."

When did The Beatles realise that the sound could be improved?

"It must have been around *Sgt Pepper* or just before, on *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*. I can't remember the exact point when we were thinking in terms of 'albums'. We all became aware of Motown bass sounds and big thick drums. It was just a learning process. Now you have to have a big bass drum and bass guitar sound, so much so I'm thinking of going away from it and back to the dinky, old-fashioned sound, maybe. We did this crazy thing with the Tuxedo Jazz Band in New Orleans. It's a backing track of me playing 'Babyface' on the piano, for a TV video tape. It should be ready in a couple of months. But when we were in New Orleans I took the track and asked these fellows to overdub, and like these guys don't know what earphones are, they're a trad band, right? A genuine New Orleans brass band.

"They couldn't get the tempo for a while, but then they started to get it. It's a terrible sound if you're looking at it critically, but it's got a lovely, joyousness about it. It's great [*Paul broke into a fair imitation of a tailgate trombone*], it's like they're revving up all the time. They're brilliant. The drummer plays bass drum with his… melon… and he has a coat hanger in his left hand, and the bottom half of a hi-hat, which he hits with his coat hanger. So it's boom, chick-a-boom, and his mate's got the snare drum. They have this ethnic talent – it's like a Morris dancing act. I'm not really a jazzer, you know. I like it, but I've never been into it.

"The Southern high-school marching bands play Stevie Wonder numbers now, y'know. It's marvellous. They're about 50 strong and they've got all the girls dancing in front of them. The bass guitar or a marching bass drum, it's just anything low down that gives a kick. Even the Mills Brothers had a bass going behind them.

"I always tried to play bass guitar so it would sound like a real bass, and I never did play a lot of twang. We used to do a skit on Jet Harris in the Cavern, when they had this big record out, and I learnt it. It used to go down great.

"No, I haven't used the violin bass for years, it doesn't record very well. I played stand-up bass on 'Love In Song', on the new album. And I also played piano and a little bit of acoustic and electric guitar. Jimmy plays most of the lead, and a couple of bits where Denny plays lead."

"EARLY BEATLES RECORDS DIDN'T HAVE A REAL BASS 'N' DRUMS SOUND…"

Finally, were there any projects Paul was working on other than Wings?

"I've got a big plan to do Rupert. I've been saying this for years unfortunately, but I would like to get together a big Bambi if you like, a Disney-style cartoon – which will be the first actual film score I've bothered to try and get into, and I'd really love to do that. The only disappointment to me is that it's such a big thing, I haven't got it together yet. I'm going to have to clear some time. I was never into Rupert at all as a kid, but we're now married, with kids, and I started reading our eldest kid a few Rupert things as a bedtime story. And I thought, 'This is far out, and psychedelic.' My idea is to make the annuals move and have them talk. I can see it all in my head. But it's very expensive, and somebody has to get together the Rupert story and it's hard to write a very good plot. You could take one of the old stories, but they're all short. And you don't get all the characters in.

"If I manage to write the story and all the songs, it will be possible then. It's a bit like Pete and his *Tommy*. If he'd asked to do a film before doing the album – 'Er, I've got an idea here, will you give me X million' – they'd have said, 'No Pete, actually.'

"But there you go, that's a great dream of mine and of course it incorporates a film score, one and a half hours of music. All the film stuff I've done so far, I'd do the theme and have someone to help me score the music. I did a couple of the main themes in *The Family Way* and then handed over to George Martin."

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS

18+

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RELEASE DATE
MAY 27
1975

WINGS

VENUS AND MARS

From Nashville to New Orleans, via Abbey Road, pop's divine architect makes the planets align.

BY BUD SCOPPA

AGAINST ALL ODDS, McCartney's African adventure had turned out so well (Millions sold! Sweet vindication!) that he decided to record the follow-up on location as well, this time with a more logical destination in mind – specifically, an American "musical city", as he put it. The shakedown cruise took place in one such locale, Nashville, in mid-1974, during which Macca tried his hand at playing the washboard and mixed it up with local heroes including Bob Wills, Chet Atkins and Floyd Cramer. Along with yielding some of the odder singles sides in the McCartney discography, including the arcane instrumental "Walking In The Park With Eloise", penned by Paul's father James, the foray continued his chronic inability to maintain a stable Wings lineup: in no time newly arrived guitarist Jimmy McCulloch and drummer Geoff Britton were at each other's throats before the band had even had a chance to cohere.

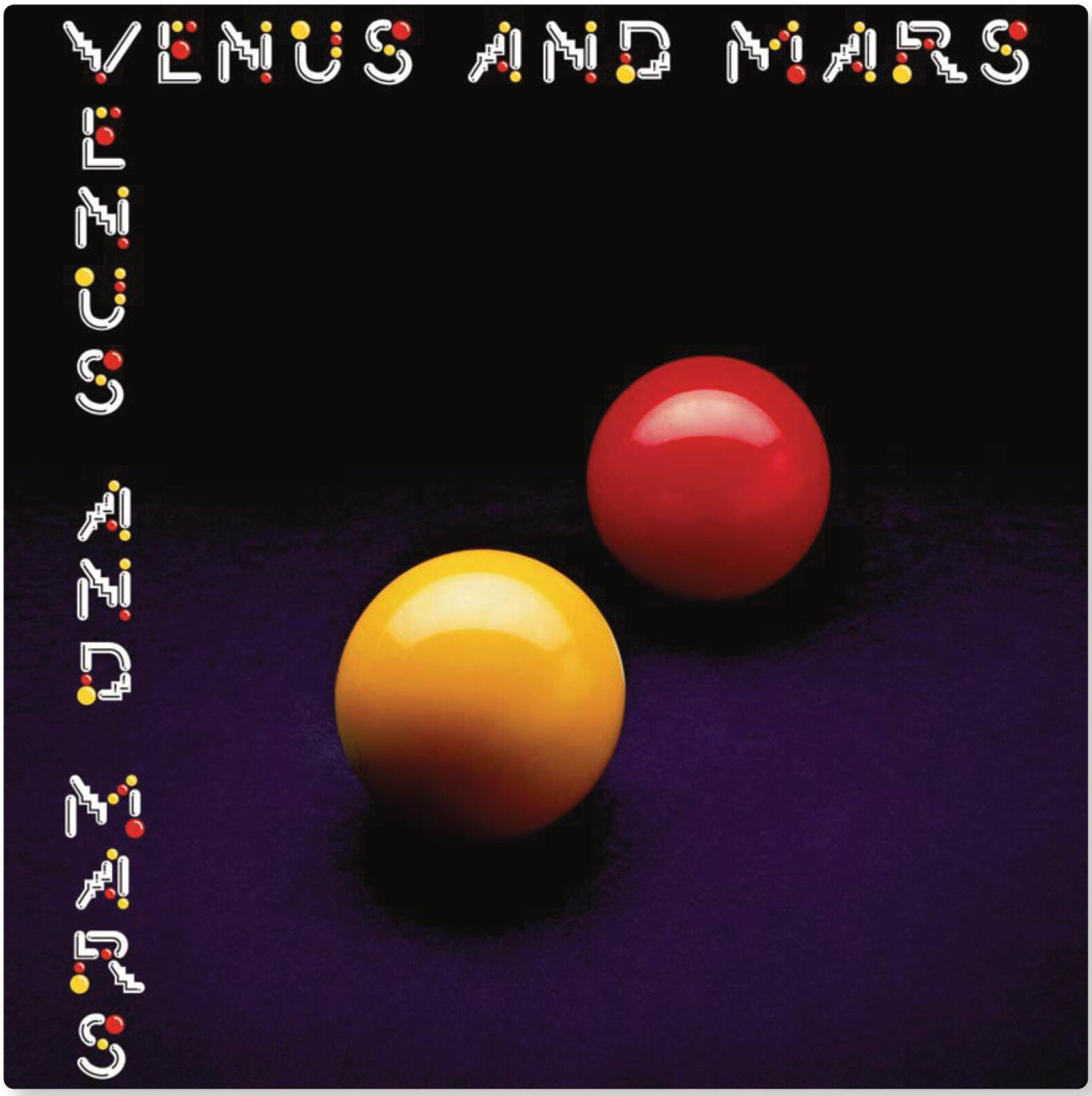
What would become *Venus And Mars* began to take shape that November with Geoff Emerick at Abbey Road, as they nailed the basic tracks for "Letting Go", "Love In Song" and McCulloch's "Medicine Jar", along with taking an initial stab at "Rock Show" (finally available on the bonus disc of Concord's 2014 expanded reissue) before Britton bailed. But the meat of the album would be cut in New Orleans. By the time they walked into Allen Toussaint and Marshall Sehorn's Sea-Saint Recording Studio in early January, with American drummer Joe English – a hastily recruited replacement for Britton – in tow, McCartney had drawn up a detailed blueprint for the album. "We'd been in Jamaica before we went to New Orleans," he explained to *Melody Maker*'s Chris Welch later that year, "and for the first time ever, I'd got all the songs together. I wrote it all out and stuck it all together like a scroll that went from here to the end of the room. So I had all that together and we just turned up and started recording."

McCartney may have premeditated the shape of the record, but he was willing to make strategic modifications to his design presented by his surroundings. While *Band On The Run* could've been recorded in any first-rate facility on the planet, *Venus And Mars* bears distinct if subtle hints of its point of origin. For starters, he had access to some of New Orleans' top brass and reed players, and he made extensive use of them, working with local arranger Tony Dorsey (who would become part of the expanded lineup for five years, starting with the Wings Over The World Tour, which kicked off that autumn). But it's a measure of McCartney's particular genius that he chose not to feature their contributions as a musical tourist might; rather, they're as fully assimilated into the tracks on which they appear as any other element.

FOR PAUL, THERE WAS NO LONGER A DISTINCTION BETWEEN FORM AND FUNCTION

The New Orleans musicians contribute heavily to the album's two standouts: the smouldering "Letting Go", on which a phalanx of trumpets and saxes blasts out a hefty counter-riff to the snarling electric guitars, connected by an elegantly funky McCartney bassline and accented by a swirl of vocal harmonies; and R'n'B raver "Call Me Back Again", on which the horns underscore Paul's soulful lead vocal. He cut additional songs in New Orleans, including "Lunch Box/Odd Sox" and "My Carnival", both of which he hoarded for later release as B-sides.

The latter, recorded in two versions and inspired by Mardi Gras, was the lone tune that overtly referenced the Crescent City, but given the formal and sonic unity of the album as released, one can only conclude that he did it as a lark, with no intention of putting it into the sequence.



CRITICS' VERDICT

"McCartney's triumph with *Band On The Run* crept up on us rather than making instant impact. And I think the same will be true of *Venus And Mars*... This new collection of songs will eventually sink into the collective rock consciousness and become widely appreciated as another triumph"

CHRIS WELCH, MELODY MAKER, MAY 31, 1975

"If *Band On The Run* hadn't been what you might call a successful record, Paul undoubtedly wouldn't have suffered an overdose of self-confidence and delivered unto us another pail of sheep dip, to wit, *Venus And Mars*... So heigh ho, on with the C&A jacket, set the Blandometer to 'Prawn Cocktail' and away we go."

NME, JUNE 7, 1975

Arriving in front of the album, the lilting "Listen To What The Man Said" was quintessential Paul & Linda, its aural wrinkle a Tom Scott sax line overdubbed in LA, which zoomed up the US singles charts. On its release that May, *Venus And Mars* was embraced by the fans and eviscerated by the reviewers, who saw McCartney as the sterile antithesis of the authentically human Lennon. In *Rolling Stone*, Paul Nelson dismissed the album as "Paul and Linda's chic, unconvincing and blatant bid to be enshrined as pop music's Romeo and Juliet... [*serving*] it all up with the offhand air of two uncaring jet-setters presenting us with the very latest in prefabricated TV dinners." Charles Shaar Murray was equally savage in an antagonistic post-release interview piece that ran in *NME*. But by bringing their inferential biases to bear on the record, the critics were completely overlooking the primary point of interest: its strikingly formal and sonic sophistication.

In writing the title song and its reprise, McCartney wasn't comparing the couple to a pair of planets floating above humanity, as some reviewers sneeringly surmised; he was simply setting up the two sides of the album with a pair of useful variations on a beguiling miniature, the first a quiet prelude to the eruption of "Rock Show" (itself a sort of sequel to "Band On The Run"), the second a harmony-laden sci-fi vignette (which could be read as a compression of Neil Young's "After The Gold Rush") leading seamlessly into the rollicking "Spirits Of Ancient Egypt".

For McCartney at that point, lyrics were typically less expressive than decorative, and thus assigned the same value as the instrumentation. The primary exception, "Treat Her Gently/Lonely Old People", which the critics of the time singled out as Macca at his most unbearably saccharine (that distinction should've been reserved for the ballad "Love In Song"), finds Paul imagining himself and Linda living out their last days, abandoned by the world and diminished by the ravages of time, but together. Those who found the song treacly on release had no way of knowing the poignancy it would take on four decades later. He tagged the piece with a minute-long cover of Tony Hatch's theme to the British soap opera *Crossroads*, explaining that it was the sort of show lonely old people would watch, thus putting a thematically apt period on an album that was anything but.

By the mid-'70s, Paul had come to employ the album not for the playing out of a theme, but for the presentation of a design, much as a skilled architect or a set decorator would, prioritising construction and organisation, transition and contrast, the frame and the detail it contains. For Paul, there was no longer a distinction between form and function, and *Venus And Mars* stands as a definitive example of his rigorous aesthetic.

TRACKMARKS VENUS AND MARS

1 Venus & Mars ★★★★
2 Rock Show ★★★★
3 Love In Song ★★
4 You Gave Me The Answer ★★★
5 Magneto And Titanium Man ★★
6 Letting Go ★★★★
7 Venus & Mars (Reprise) ★★★★
8 Spirits Of Ancient Egypt ★★★★
9 Medicine Jar ★★★
10 Call Me Back Again ★★★★★
11 Listen To What The Man Said ★★★★
12 Treat Her Gently/ Lonely Old People ★★★★
13 Crossroads Theme ★★★

Label: Capitol
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Abbey Road; Sea-Saint, New Orleans; Wally Heider Studios, LA

Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass, gtr, piano, Moog, Mellotron), Linda McCartney (bk vocals, piano, organ, melodica), Denny Laine (gtr, bk vocals, Moog, sitar), Jimmy McCulloch (gtr, bk vocals; lead vocal on "Medicine Jar"), Joe English (drums, bk vocals), Geoff Britton (drums), Allen Toussaint (piano, elec gtr), Tony Dorsey (arr), Clyde Kerr, John Longo, Steve Howard (trumpet), Michael Pierce (alto sax), Alvin Thomas (tenor sax), Carl Blouin (baritone sax), Tom Scott (sax), Gayle Levant (harp), Kenneth "Afro" Williams (congas on "Rock Show"), Dave Mason (guitar on "Listen To What The Man Said")
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 1

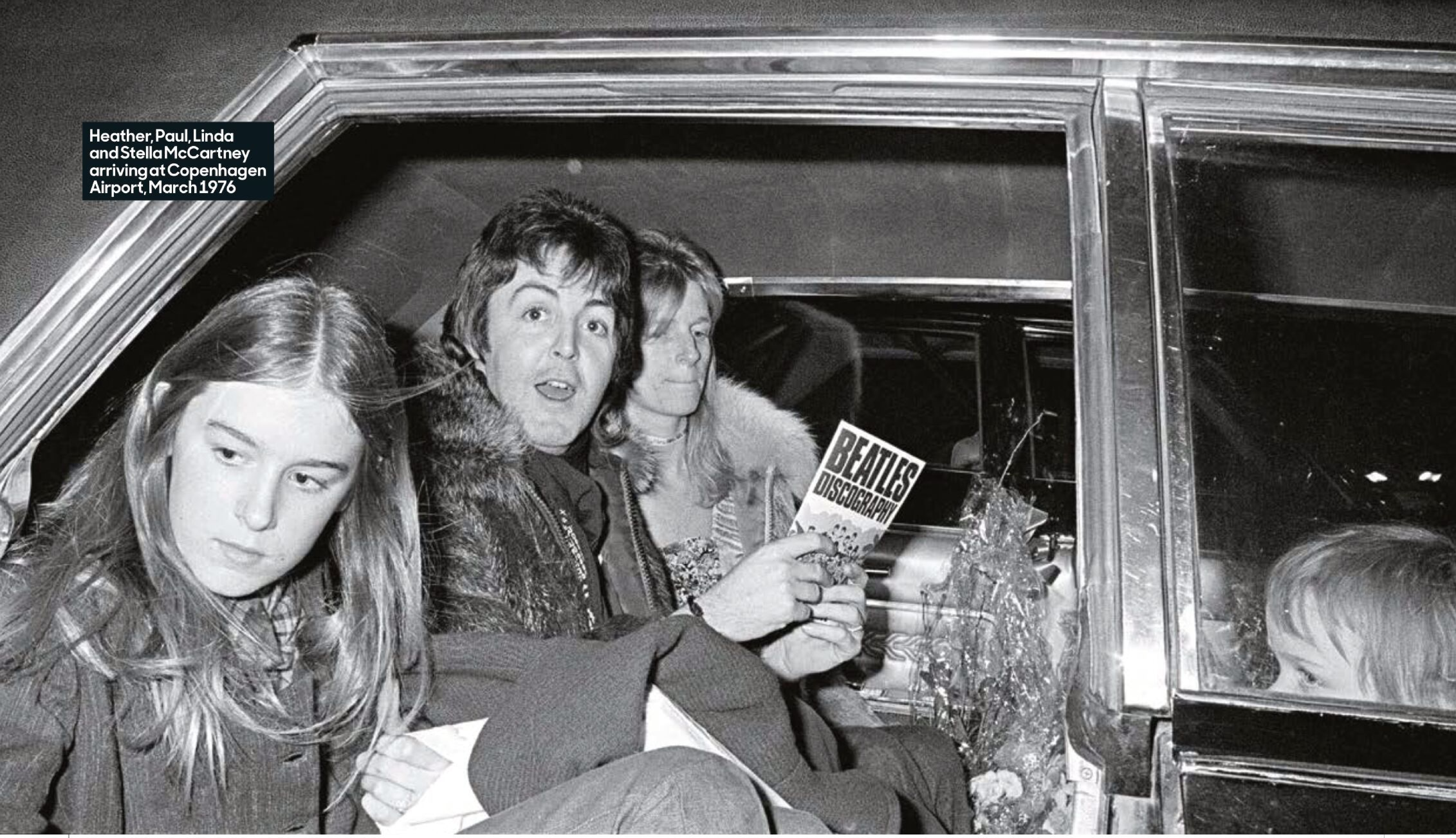
“It would
Beatles

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

ruin the whole thing for me…”

A Beatles reunion? It’d have to be for music, not money, claims Paul, as the $25 million rumours reach fever pitch. In the meantime, there’s the world-conquering *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* to grapple with, including “the first British cooking on record. There are chips at the end…” Condiments of the season, reckons **CHRIS WELCH**

“Wings is growing”: (l-r) Jimmy McCulloch, Denny Laine, Linda and Paul McCartney on stage in Rotterdam, March 25, 1976



Heather, Paul, Linda and Stella McCartney arriving at Copenhagen Airport, March 1976

Melody Maker
Beatles reunion? • The only way we could come back together would be if we wanted to do something musically, not lukewarm just to get the money •
DENVER SPEAKS!
Remember the Sabbath

TAKEN FROM
MELODY MAKER
27/3/1976

"I'M NOT GOING to be blackmailed into going." No, Paul wasn't talking about the much-publicised and debated reunion of The Beatles. Nor even the Wings tour of America. He was in the throes of attempting to opt out of a dinner invitation, pressed home with persistence by one of the throng milling at a West End hotel last week.

Paul, Linda and Wings were on the loose in a suite where sandwiches piled up around bottles of beer. DJs tripped over journalists in the merry-go-round of interviews at a press conference convened only hours before the band were due to depart on their first dates of 1976. "Look, I'm off to Copenhagen tomorrow and I've got to get some sleep." "But we'd be thrilled if you came..."

Well, it was a private conversation, but it underlined the kind of pressures still exerted on the famous ones of rock. Paul extracted himself from the situation with a mixture of firmness and diplomacy born of long practice. For just a few seconds the warning signals flashed and you could sense the old Liverpudlian cutting edge being honed and made ready, and remembered the days when all four Beatles were ready to cut through cant if threatened or surrounded.

But Paul relaxed and seemed eager and happy to talk about the new Wings album, *Wings At The Speed Of Sound*, with an enthusiasm and courtesy that is rare among lesser talents than McCartney's. He was even prepared to comment on the 25 million dollar offer currently being made by US promoter Bill Sargent to reform The Beatles, despite his having made clear in the past that his interest is now in Wings and not the past. But first he discussed Wings' recent adventures.

"We had fab fun in Australia," said Paul slipping into Mersey Mania dialogue. "It was the first real tour we'd done for a while. The audiences were great and we just dug playing. It was more like a holiday."

What happened about the trip to Japan that was cancelled when the authorities wouldn't let them in due to an old dope-smoking offence?

"It was the Minister of Justice's fault. I suppose he'd say it was my fault for having smoked some of the deadly weed. But we had our visas signed by the London Japanese Embassy. Everything had been cleared, David Bailey was coming over to do a film and we were in Australia, just about a week out from going to Japan, when a little note arrived saying sorry, the Japanese Minister of Justice says 'No.'

"They're still old-fashioned out there. There's a generation gap and the wrong end of the gap is in the Ministry Of Justice, as it is here. The older folks see a great danger in allowing in an alien who has admitted smoking marijuana, and supposedly they're trying to stamp it out, using all the wrong methods as usual."

Did Paul feel angry about being barred?

"Oh yeah, a bit over the top. It was just one of those things, but we felt a bit sick about it. It's so short-sighted."

After the Australian tour they sent a televised version of their show to Japan.

"We did the TV show for all the people who couldn't get in to see us in Australia because some of the tickets were going for Sinatra prices. And we immediately got a print of it up to Japan, so that the weekend we were supposed to have arrived, they had a big TV show and they turned it round into a big current affairs programme, too, with an hour and a half of people discussing the merits of marijuana. In a way we had become martyrs for the cause, which is a drag."

With all this travelling, when did Paul get time to start working on the album?

"We fit it in, y'know... We did Australia, and then because Japan didn't come off we had a great holiday, and as Hawaii was on the way back we stopped there and I got the album together in my head. We'd done a little bit of recording in September and then had Christmas off. We started on the album in January or February – sometime – I'm a bit hazy.

"The album didn't take too long – it could have been done a lot quicker. We didn't rush it, but let the ideas blossom. There were a few things I especially wanted to do. I had a song for Denny written and a few other tunes I definitely wanted to do and got those down. And then there were a few I didn't really know what to do with. I put a backing track down, then got the idea of getting Joe English to do it, because he's got a very good voice.

"Linda's got this track, 'Cook Of The House', so I thought it would be good to give one to Joe as well. He said: 'Oh, er, well OK.' And when he'd done it we were all surprised. He can sing well, can't he? But it's nothing to what he could do, but that's down to the future. And Denny I obviously wanted to get going and cooking a bit because I like the idea of giving him a push.

"The band came together a couple of weeks ago for rehearsals down at Elstree and the nice thing is there is a song called 'Silly Love Songs', which has a brass bit which the brass players in the

"TO REFORM THE BEATLES TO MAKE MONEY WOULD BE THE WRONG MOTIVE"

JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS

band worked out in the studio. They can really get behind it because it's their bit. We also used two euphoniums on 'Warm And Beautiful', but those are session guys."

Was it Paul's intention with this LP to bring the members of Wings forward as much as possible?

"That's always the object with anything I do, and to try and get out of a rut and do something different. When I was in Jamaica, I heard a reggae record which featured a trombone all on its own. It sounded daft and fruity and I filed it away at the back of my mind that I'd love to use a trombone. And, of course, we have Tony Dorsey, who plays trombone for us, so we could use it as a solo instrument on the album."

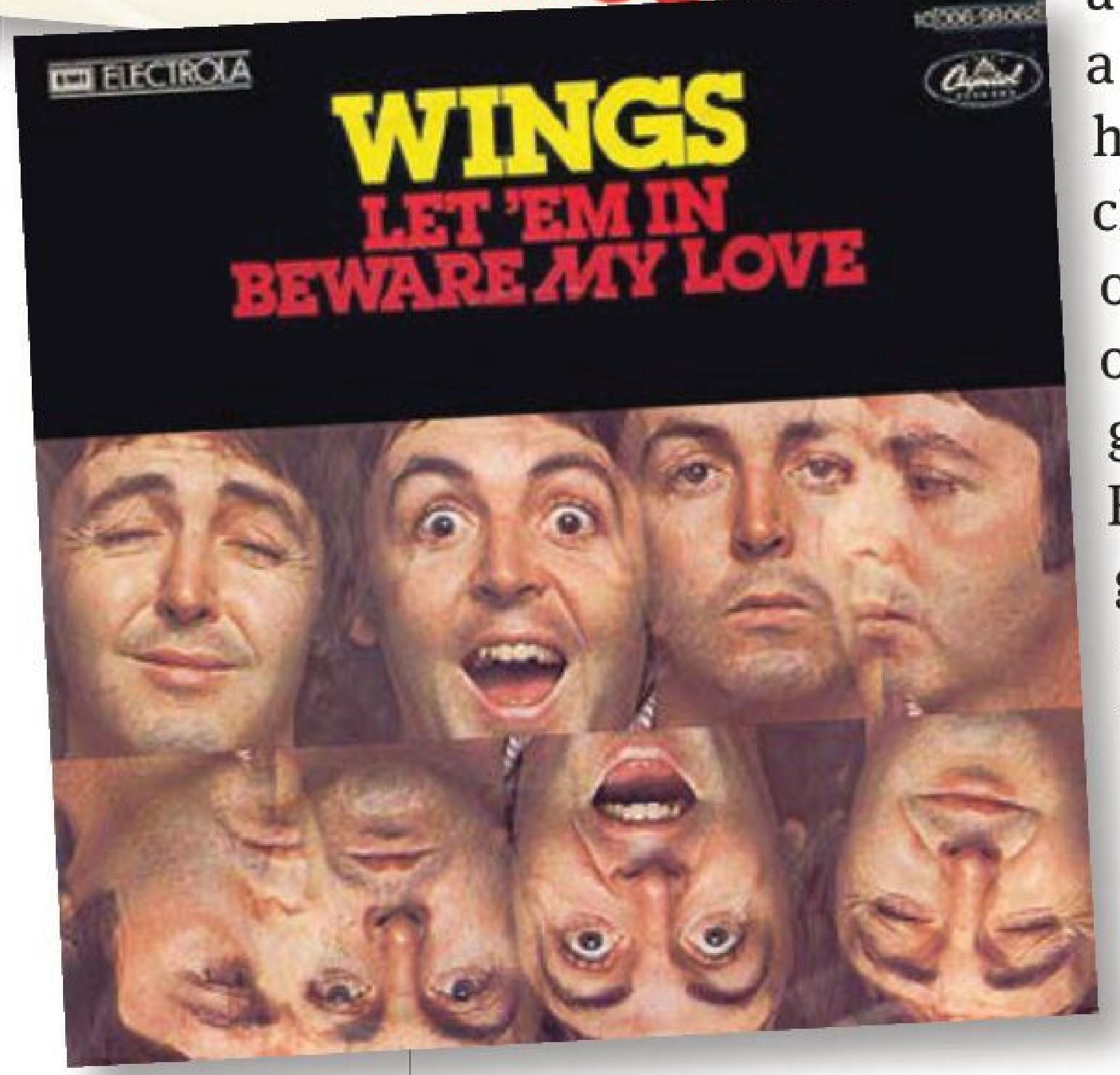
What was the origin of the doorbell used to introduce 'Let 'Em In', the album's first track? Were they the McCartney household chimes?

"Well, as it happens, it is our actual doorbell which our drummer bought us, so it has a group significance. And it seemed a good introduction to the album."

Did Paul want to involve himself in a theme, like *Venus And Mars*?

"Well, it wasn't really a theme on *Venus And Mars*. No, I didn't think at all of themes. I thought of a bunch of tunes. There is a theme to it once you've heard it a few times a sort of family, love-ish, warm-ish feel. Well, I can never analyse me own stuff."

ELECTROLA
Capitol
WINGS
SILLY LOVE SONGS



Was he steeling himself for criticism?

"*Waal* – you know, this time… you take it differently each time. I sit there and think: 'It's gonna be great reviews this time,' and you are disappointed if there is one bad one. But this time I'm just thinking, 'I'm getting on with it, I've just made a record, let them get on with it. I hope they like it, but if the reviewers don't, well I hope the people like it.'"

Will Paul incorporate many of the new songs in the show?

"Because it's a very new album and we're off to Europe, it's a bit soon for anybody to have heard much of the stuff. So we've only got three of the songs in – 'Beware My Love', 'Silly Love Songs', and 'Let 'Em In', all up-tempo. We've got plenty of rehearsal time before we actually play America, and by that time, the album will be better known. We're not going to pre-judge, we'll see what numbers people like."

It seemed to me that "Silly Love Songs" was an obvious single.

"Yeah, that seems to be the one people are talking about. But we've released the album before any singles, mainly because the radio stations haven't been told what is our preference and they can decide for themselves. And they'll play various cuts and see which rises to the surface. 'Silly Love Songs' is the one we're thinking of at the moment. Another surprise for me was 'Warm And Beautiful'. It's no way a single, but 'Yesterday' wasn't single material. It's in that vein, though. A nice song."

What was the origin of "Cook Of The House", Linda's speciality in raunchy rock'n'roll?

"Well, we were in Adelaide and rented a house to stay at rather than a hotel. And after the gig each night, Linda and I would get dropped off and sit up in the kitchen and have a late-night bite. They had these pots of sage and onion – all the condiments of the season – that's a joke that, condiments of the season."

Oh, er, delayed *MM* laughter as slow-witted journalist entirely fails to spot the jest.

"Well, all this stuff was lined up, and it was a kind of freak song, and I took everything I saw and tried to work it into the song. Every line in the song was actually in that kitchen."

What were the sizzling noises in the intro?

"We went round to our house with the mobile unit and Linda decided to cook a meal and get cooking sounds recorded, and then fed the meal to us and the engineers. We all had a laugh and a drink. The mobile was outside the house and we just ran wires into the kitchen. 'Take one. Bacon frying.' The first British cooking on record. There are chips at the end, which is great because it sounds like applause. If you get any letters to Any Questions you can tell readers it was an E flat bacon pan and Selmer chips.

"The song is very high-school-orientated because that was Linda's scene as a kid in America. Of course we didn't have any of that dating and taking chicks out in cars at the age of 17. The most we had was a hop on the back of a tandem, and we'd have records in the classroom at the end of term. I remember one day when the guy in The Remo Four brought a guitar, I brought a guitar, George brought in his guitar and we went into the history room, Cliff Edge's room. The teacher's name was Mr Edge, see. I remember doing 'Long Tall Sally' and all the old stuff, and that was the nearest we ever got to a high-school hop."

Why not get Wings to do an album of old pop hits?

"Listen – now don't get me on projects. There are so many of those to do. I've got a head full of that. A Buddy Holly album, an album of old pop tunes – there are millions of ideas like that. But how about the hits of the '70s? I know what you mean, but it hasn't happened yet."

Were there any major projects for Paul in the coming year other than the Wings tours?

"Well, no. We go to Europe and America, and then we haven't got anything planned, just some breather time. But Wings is growing and it surprises me in a way, because I half expected it not to happen. It was a question of follow that, after The Beatles. But it's established and the main thing is we are enjoying playing, and can get off on it, which is a great advantage over a lot of older groups. As Denny says: 'It's a great group.' The old feeling."

Does Paul get tired about being asked about The Beatles reunion?

"I don't mind; as I say, at the moment we are definitely going on a tour of America with Wings, and that's a nice thing I'm looking forward to. But I don't count out anything else. Maybe in America one night, we'll loon down to a studio with someone," said Paul non-committally. "I'm just playing it by ear. The main thing about this huge offer… THE HUGE OFFER… well, the man's an embarrassment.

"If I were a fellow back in Liverpool aged 18 doing me first job, I'd think, 'Nobody can refuse that, can they? It's just too much money.' Even if we were terrible, it would be worth it – right? Well for me, the trouble is, I've always been so proud of the Beatles thing and the embarrassment of the thing is that so much money is being offered, most people in the world would say: 'You have to accept.' But for me the thing is that for a thing like that to actually happen I wouldn't want it that way, 'cos of money.

"It's what people said when we split up. All the wiseacres, all the Jack the lads, 'Well, they'll be back soon enough, as soon as they feel the pinch.' I hate that that's what it's come to. It's a drag and, for me, the main truth about the whole thing is I know as much about this offer as you know. Exactly what's in the papers and the telegram I've received from this man, Bill Sargent. Er – now I haven't had any other communication besides that from anyone. You can talk to the other three about it.

"In fact, I talked to John the other night. Just happened to be talking to him on the phone. We chatted for about an hour and a half – he was in New York. We just chatted and rambled, about politics, whatever we were interested in. A natter. And we never once mentioned the reunion or the offer. I thought about it after we got off the phone. We just didn't even mention it. John didn't say: 'Well, what do you think?' So that's where it's at for me. It's a funny one. I understand how most people in the world think we'd have to accept it.

"For me, the only way The Beatles could come back together again would be if we wanted to do something musically, not lukewarm just to get the money. You could do it to make a lot of money, but it would be the wrong motive, and this is what bugs me. I really don't want to do a thing that was always for the right motives – and The Beatles were for the right motives – and make it a total cop-out.

"It would ruin the whole Beatles thing for me. If the four of us were really keen on the idea, or something in the next year makes us keen on it, or I just talk to the others and find out that they are keen secretly, then I must feel I ought to do something about it. But not having talked about it at all – as I say, we talked on the phone for an hour and didn't even mention it. And I'd read the papers which said John Lennon was the hottest on this. And I spoke to the bugger and he didn't even mention it. Where do you go from there?"

RELEASE DATE
MARCH 25
1976

WINGS

WINGS AT THE SPEED OF SOUND

In the midst of a megatour, Macca experiments with democracy… Linda? Denny? Jimmy? Joe? Let 'em in!

BY PETER WATTS

WINGS WERE CRUISING. The spectacular success of *Band On The Run* and *Venus And Mars* had put the band into the supergroup category, leading on naturally to their first stadium world tour, which began in Britain in September 1975 before taking them to Australia and then around Europe and America for much of 1976. In the middle of this, they recorded *Wings At The Speed Of Sound*, which, as the title implies, had all the feel of a rushed stop-gap. Released to maintain momentum, it did just that and more, despite getting mauled by critics. The band, personnel settled, were unstoppable.

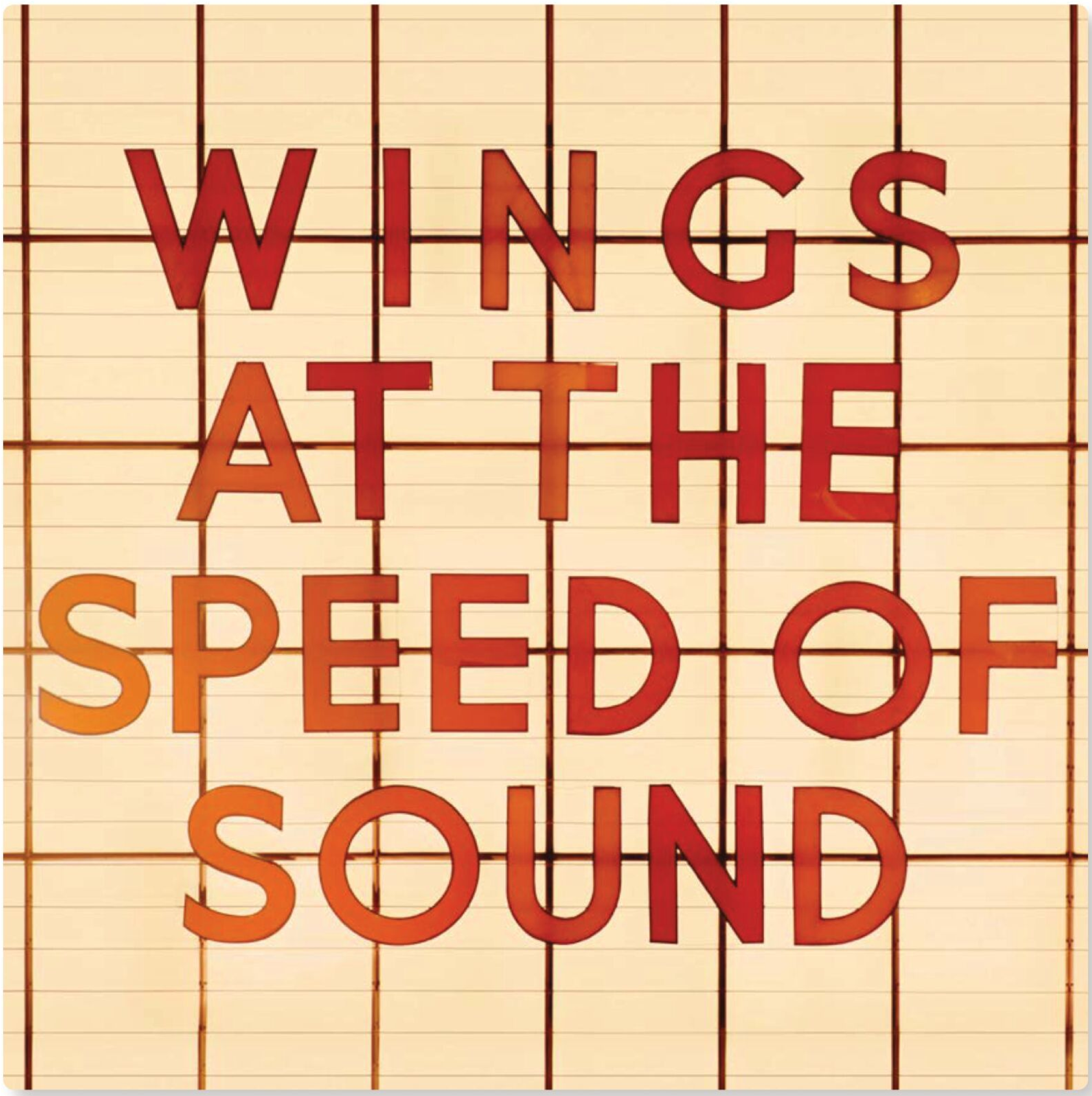
The album sold gazillions and part of that success – other than the fact that *Band On The Run* had turned Wings into a commercial jumbo – was due to the single, "Silly Love Songs", which was released in April 1976 almost alongside the album and was a US No 1 for five weeks that summer. The song was McCartney's witty riposte to critics who complained he only wrote fluff, an insult that prodded McCartney, on a mid-tour break in Hawaii, to write a defiant defence of cheese. It is consummate songwriting, as McCartney manages to parody love songs with the simplest chorus imaginable – ascending notes and the words *"I love you"* – but also celebrate them: *"Some people want to fill the world with silly love songs/And what's wrong with that?… love isn't silly at all."* It's a brilliant piece of soul – the final winning touch coming from McCartney's bass supplying a nifty disco beat.

That this very personal response by McCartney helped promote a best-selling album was somewhat ironic, given that *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* was intended to show the band were more than just McCartney's backing group. Wings were Wings, not Paul McCartney and Wings, he insisted, and the shared workload on the album was evidence of their democracy – although it probably had just as much to do with the hectic timetable, which also partly explains the occasionally tepid feel of some of McCartney's own contributions. So Denny Laine and Jimmy McCulloch wrote and sang their own songs, "Time To Hide" and "Wino Junko", respectively. And that wasn't all. Laine sang one of McCartney's ("The Note You Never Wrote"), while Linda McCartney and even drummer Joe English got a chance to sing lead (by turn, "Cook Of The House" and "Must Do Something About It").

> AS THE TITLE IMPLIES, IT HAS ALL THE FEEL OF A RUSHED STOP-GAP

The vocal variety is intriguing, but McCartney dominates, partly because he also produced, and the sound of the album was integral to its success. *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* was recorded at Abbey Road, and McCartney's easy familiarity with the studio shines through, ensuring songs always have an arena-rock polish even if they seem weak or, conversely and occasionally concurrently, address heavy subjects like addiction and depression – a morose mood lies just beneath the surface throughout. Songs like "The Note You Never Wrote" are, if nothing else, brilliant studio compositions, with some of Pink Floyd's grasp of atmospherics; other songs, like "Warm And Beautiful", work from such a familiar template that it can be difficult to judge quite how good they actually are.

There's something of this in the opening track, "Let 'Em In", the album's second massive single, which begins with the sound of a



CRITICS' VERDICT

"The main title might lead you to conclude that this is a space-trucking high-speed rap. But there is no sense of battering urgency... it represents the avowed intention of giving more elbow room to all members of the band, and clearing out the image of it being a one-man show... As Linda says: 'It grows on yer!' And indeed it does."

CHRIS WELCH, MM, MARCH 27, 1976

"Yes, everybody, McCartney's made another duff LP, though as its rapid acceleration up the charts shows, not too many people seem aware of this... He doesn't always know the difference between a good idea and a bad one, and then when he's got a good one, doesn't always know what to do with it."

STEVE CLARKE, NME, APRIL 17, 1976

doorbell – the McCartneys' own – inviting the listener to an audience with the band. The song rests on a repeated two-note piano line, supplemented by military drums and flutes and a lyric that namechecks *"Martin Luther" [King], "Phil and Don" [Everly] and "Brother John" [Lennon]*. Daringly laidback, it's pretty insubstantial, but certainly fun.

The jaunty air evaporates with "The Note You Never Wrote", a McCartney number sung by Laine alluding to government corruption, with the vocal low in the mix. Very Floydish, it is sinister and almost surreal, with McCulloch contributing a fine guitar solo. "She's My Baby" restores some zip, before the hard rocker "Beware My Love", an attempt to hit a "Live And Let Die" vein, with McCartney's voice barely hanging on for the ride as guitars, piano and backing vocals drive it towards a neatly frantic conclusion. It's too long, but it's one of McCartney's better attempts at rocking out and deserves wider appreciation.

Again, the shift of mood is abrupt as Jimmy McCulloch contributes a self-hating confessional, "Wino Junko", written with Colin Allen, drummer with McCulloch's old band, Stone The Crows. McCulloch, who died in 1979 of heart complications brought on by a heroin overdose, holds little back even if his voice is insipid – *"Take what I need until I bleed/People will say I've gone insane/Ain't scared to die, it's such a high."*

After "Silly Love Songs", Side Two serves up a true oddity. "Cook Of The House" begins with the sound of what Paul McCartney claimed to be bacon frying – which seems unlikely given Linda's vegetarianism – and ends with a bubbling chip pan, as the McCartneys hooked a mobile studio up to their kitchen so they could record the sound of cooking. In between, Linda – whose backing vocals are generally terrific here – contributes a nonsensical '50s rocker about her culinary prowess, with a voice so flat you could argue it's deliberately deadpan. Unlike much of the album, it dares to be different. It's also appalling.

A note of seriousness comes via Laine's slinky, sparse, stadium-friendly rocker "Time To Hide", before the hand-me-round continues and Joe English takes the vocals on "Must Do Something About It", a slim number, but with an intriguing McCartney lyric about loneliness and impressive delivery from English. The bouncy "San Ferry Ann", with trumpet flourishes, brings us to the big emotional pay-off, "Warm And Beautiful", a piano-led ballad that Elvis Costello considers one of the best love songs Paul wrote for Linda, but in truth is simple to the point of plodding. McCartney would later rearrange "Warm And Beautiful" so the Brodsky Quartet could play it at Linda's memorial concerts. In its original form, it is typical of *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* as a whole: unthreatening, sincere, the perfect accompaniment for a record-breaking tour.

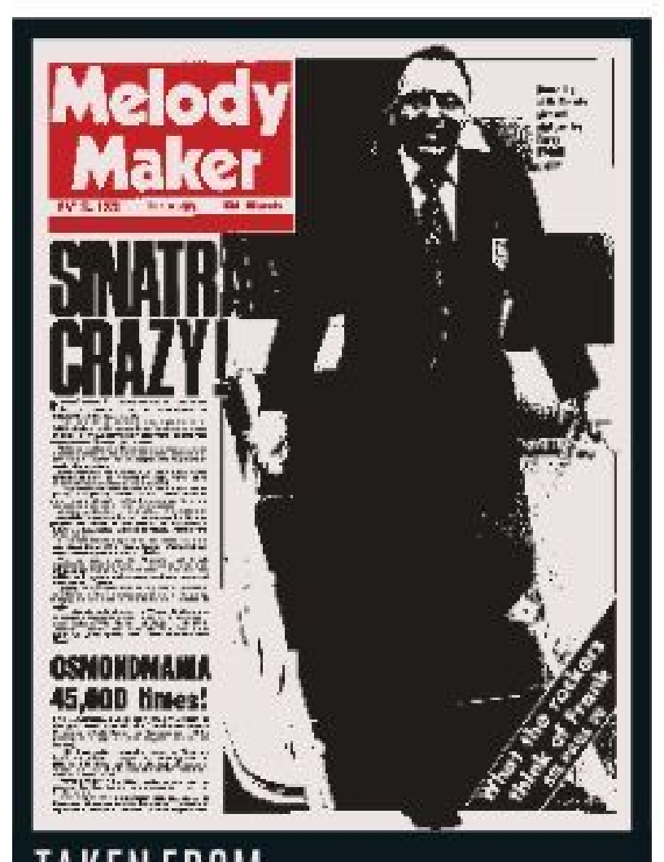
TRACKMARKS WINGS AT THE SPEED OF SOUND

1 Let 'Em In ★★★★
2 The Note You Never Wrote ★★★
3 She's My Baby ★★
4 Beware My Love ★★★★
5 Wino Junko ★★★
6 Silly Love Songs ★★★★★
7 Cook Of The House ★
8 Time To Hide ★★★
9 Must Do Something About It ★★
10 San Ferry Anne ★★★
11 Warm And Beautiful ★★★

Label: MPL/Capitol
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Abbey Road, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass, piano), Linda McCartney (vocals, keyboard), Denny Laine (vocals, guitar), Jimmy McCulloch (vocals, guitar), Joe English (vocals, drums), Steve Howard (trumpet, flugelhorn), Thaddeus Richard (saxophone, clarinet, flute), Howie Casey (saxophone), Tony Dorsey (trombone)
Highest chart position: UK 2; US 1

“Christ, I’m so frigging ordinary, it’s terrifying!”

“Are you a bastard?” In the wake of “Mull Of Kintyre”, Paul, Linda and Denny Laine brace themselves for a tough ride from the “snidey music papers”. *COLIN IRWIN* takes a river trip through London Town with the trio, and tries – initially, at least – to live up to their suspicions… “Can we talk about something you like about us?”



TAKEN FROM
MELODY MAKER
01/04/1978

MY GOD, THE things some people will do for publicity. And the things some hacks will do for a story. It's an afternoon of abject misery, a doomy day with odd bits of rain dropping lethargically on you. It makes you yearn for the abolition of the licensing laws.

We're on a boat, see. *The Royal Princess*. On the Thames. Waiting for Paul McCartney. And he's 40 minutes late. And the British press is grumbling and cold. "He won't turn up," groans one battered scribe, authoritatively. "He'll get more publicity by not turning up. Makes sense, dunnit?"

Even Tony Brainsby, Macca's publicist, whose optimism oozes shamelessly, looks a trifle concerned.

Of course, he does turn up, arm-in-arm with Linda, and of course, all malice towards him is instantly forgotten and everyone fawns around him. And off we go on our little boat trip. The *Mail*, *Express* and *Mirror* cling to McCartney, while the *Evening Standard* and *The Sun* content themselves with Linda.

We sail towards Tower Bridge and Paul, Linda and Denny Laine are ushered to the front of the boat to have their photos taken, eating fish and chips out of newspaper with the bridge in the background. This is the shot, minus the fish and the chips, that appears on the cover of their new album, *London Town*, which is, naturally, the purpose of this curious expedition.

"Everton for the cup!" shouts Linda. But they've been knocked out, dear. "Next year." A mass of photographers grapple with one another and climb on each other's backs for a vantage point of this prize shot. One entrepreneur flasher has gained access to the captain's cabin.

"Can you look over here!" shouts somebody. "*Farmer's Journal*, y'know." They break into a chorus of "Mull Of Kintyre". The photographers decline their invitation to join in.

"Are you a bastard?" declares Paul, unsmiling, as we shake hands.

Boat ride over, we have adjourned to a film studio in Soho where Wings are assembling to view the editing of a promo film they did yesterday. Paul is distinctly agitated, having just read what was ostensibly an interview with Linda in which the writer makes a few passing kicks in the direction of his groin.

"I wouldn't mind," he's saying. "It was obviously bottling up inside him and I wouldn't mind if he'd come out with it, but he was so meek. Why didn't he come out with it then? I would have hit him and he would have got his story."

Paul's mug looms large on the screen. The sound of "With A Little Luck" already tightly trapped in my skull after living with the album for a couple of weeks, seems almost as familiar as "Mull Of Kintyre" as it booms out. You'll doubtless be seeing this film on your telly screens many times as "With A Little Luck" soars to No 1, as it surely will.

Linda wants close-ups of the drummer included. "Yeah," agrees Denny. "Just to show there's one there. It might make people stop phoning me up, asking for the job." Paul wonders why it has to start with a close-up on his face.

"Identification," says Michael Lindsay-Hogg, the director. We see it through again and again as it changes subtly.

"Are you worried about it?" Lindsay-Hogg asks Paul. "Oh, don't take any notice of me," says Paul. "I've just read a bad review." "Oh?" says Lindsay-Hogg. "Was it one of those snidey music papers?"

The man is immensely perceptive.

Media scrum aboard *The Royal Princess*, 1978

PAULIE'S THE NICE guy. The charmer. They all tell you that. And it's all true. He's an extremely likeable character. On the bus he was grace and politeness itself, adapting to the bizarre situation with easy comfort. The guy's the complete pro.

Naturally there are suspicions about this natural public relations genius, and reading past interviews I was highly sceptical of this constant affability. In the bickering that went on immediately after The Beatles split, Lennon once spoke of McCartney and his 'honest little Paulie' persona, but he is genuinely open (less affable than usual, I suspect, because of the nasty article) and very warm, though the steel is also evidently there. He's a man so obviously in charge of almost every situation in which he finds himself, he'd make a great manager.

After interviewing Martin Carthy and Pete Seeger, I thought I was beyond awe and reverence, but McCartney creates it with ease. The sheer factual achievement of the guy is staggering in itself, and an exceptional charisma weighs in on all that, too... if Cliff Richard has found the elixir of everlasting youth, then he must have lent it to Paul McCartney at some stage.

The most surprising thing is this apparent insecurity that's brought to the surface by the article he's just been reading. He repeatedly goes back to it. And at the other extreme he's still ecstatic about the success of "Mull Of Kintyre", Wings' first No 1, Britain's biggest-ever-selling single, and the first single to top sales of two million.

He tells me gleefully how amazed and delighted he is by its staggering success, and he talks optimistically of the record making it in the States next summer (it flopped in America). He's amassed so much acclaim, filled so many record cabinets and made so much money, you'd imagine he'd be blasé about it all. That he wouldn't court the press with boat trips up the Thames. That he'd laugh off one derogatory music press article.

"Silly, innit? When Linda first came over from America, I was on the cover of *The Observer*, I think it was, and someone sent it round to me and I was quite chuffed to be on there. I had it pinned to the wall or something and she said, 'God!' and she couldn't believe I'd actually noticed I was on the cover. She said, 'You don't seriously get into all that, do you?' And I said, 'Yeah, I'm sorry, but I do. I'm not great like you thought I was, I'm just like... Christ, I'm so frigging... ordinary, it's terrifying.'"

The formal Wings interview took place in a room at Trillion Video. We sat round a table like a board of directors, drank tea, felt very civilised and talked with, I think, reasonable frankness. Linda kept making remarks like "Scotland for the Cup" and "Everton for the cup next year" and "Sid Vicious for the cup", while Denny – who'd been moved to say "I'm really enjoying this interview," in the early stages, later appeared to get bored. Sorry, Denny.

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WINGS
A Side
R6019
7YCE 21795
With a Little Luck
(McCartney)
From the album 'London Town' PAS 10012
Produced by Paul McCartney
Published and administered by McCartney Music by arrangement with ATV Music Ltd.
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"I LIKE BEING BANNED... HAVING THE AUTHORITIES AGAINST YOU"
PAUL McCARTNEY

***Melody Maker:* You get criticised a lot...**
Linda (cutting in): But doesn't everybody? I love David Bowie, and the stuff I read about him is unbelievable. I hope he doesn't take it too seriously.
Denny: We get put down by people who don't know us and who are sitting there... [*he looks me up and down seriously*] ...shifty-eyed. You get too much of that and it gets you, it gets me.

MM: But on a musical level – that you're MOR and wimpish and sentimental.
Linda: Only by critics, not by people. There are probably 10 critics who say "horrible album" and "lightweight" – but everyone in the street listens to it and they're not there to pick holes in it.

MM: But what's your answer to that specific criticism?
Paul: Piss off.

BARRY PLUMMER

Wings over London: fish'n'chips at Tower Bridge in 1978

RICHARD YOUNG/REX FEATURES

MM: Yes, but do you have doubts about yourself? Don't you ever feel that maybe you are getting a bit soppy?
Paul: Yeah, that's the trouble. It doesn't help, y'know. If you've just made an album. I remember writing "Rock Show" on *Venus And Mars* and I remember in me mind using the word "steamy". I really wanted it to be sweaty, I really wanted it to be a hoarse, strangulated voice. I really wanted the backing to be burning the balls off the whole thing, y'know.

We came to do it and we had a lot of trouble, actually with the drumming. We ended up with Jimmy overdubbing a track and he had much more of a dirty feel – he was out of his skull at the time – but he helped to give it a dirty feel. But in truth we never really made that track come off to me. But it doesn't help when someone else comes along and says, "Wimpish, wimpish, middle of the road…' It's like in school. You get an essay and you try and do somethin' for the buggers, and they turn round and (slaps his own hand and adopts schoolmarm voice): "You were late for school today, don't do it again." Fucking hell, man, tell me it's all right, better luck next time, give me some kind of encouragement but don't do that to me. 'Cos it makes me do worse.

Next time you come to do a rocker, you think last time didn't come off and they're gonna hate me for it again and they're building your paranoia. I suppose it's their job and they've got to do it, but I don't think it helps.

MM: Haven't there been works where, maybe, looking back, the criticisms were justified?
Paul: Some of them, yeah.

MM: Are there songs now you're… er… ashamed of? Or wish you hadn't written?
Linda (aghast): Ashamed? How can you be ashamed of a song, can you imagine that? Spare me, please.
Paul: No …songs …you're singing to the world, aren't you? You're doing this thing and it's supposed to be nice, singing, and somebody comes along and goes n'ya, eight out of ten. It really is school, man, it's like teachers. You really think when you get out of school, 'Well, at last I got out of that shit, especially when you get self-employed or somethin'. I got me stamps, fuck 'em, I'm self-employed now.' But I've worked me bloody way into the record business and now I've got teachers again, slapping me wrists every time I don't quite pull it off… [*pause and sigh*] … It's a bit of a drag talking about this, though. Can we talk about football? Is there anything you like about us?

MM: Oh, lots and lots.
Paul: Can we talk about something you like about us?

IT'S BEEN A fraught week or two for Wings. They've been down at Twickenham working on a film made on the last Wings tour (no, they don't know when it'll be shown). It was a shrewd opportunity to do a bit of promo on the album too, and interviews were fixed up. But Paul and Linda both went down with flu, everything got delayed, and features editors tore their hair out. But initial reaction to the record has been good – justifiably, because it's a strong album, as we've said in our review – and they may have found themselves a new drummer.

An old mate of Denny's, Steve Holley, formerly with The Kiki Dee Band, has been sitting in with Wings and all are agreed how good he is – "already better than the other drummers we've had" is Linda's assessment.

"The answer is no, he's not our new drummer, though we've been playing with him. We're not in any hurry. Last time we did drummer auditions they were all too hard-headed and professional and weird. We're not really bothered. We've got an album out, so we can coast for a while."

Nevertheless, they want to get back on the road, though they won't hazard a guess as to when, and they won't say which road. "We have the luxury," says Paul, "of not having to decide what we're gonna do next, so we're gonna take it.

"That's what it's supposed to be all about, coming up in groups, being able to indulge yourself and be able to do music the way you wanna do it, so that's exactly what we're gonna do next. We wanna go on the road, we fancy it and stuff, but you never know. It may be an amazing summer and the idea of going for a row in a boat may be more appealing."

Jimmy McCulloch and Joe English decided to leave Wings independently during the recording of *London Town* (which was recorded on the boat off the Virgin Isles). Most of the tracks had been laid down, so it didn't cause too much disruption to the album, although Paul had to play drums on a couple of things just as he suddenly had to extend his versatility when Henry McCullough and Denny Seiwell left immediately after *Band On The Run* in Lagos.

It brings into focus one constant nagging doubt about Wings and the problems they apparently have in holding onto musicians. Henry McCullough, who quit Wings after a row with Paul over a certain riff he wanted to play during the recording of *Band On The Run*, has since described McCartney as "an overwhelming personality". You can't help wondering about the validity of Wings as a group rather than merely a mouthpiece for Paul McCartney, and whispers of Paul's domination of the group must be put to him as a possible reason for the failure to maintain a constant band. Paul listens silently to the point. And then: "Maybe it's 'cos Henry's underwhelming. Point number one: do you know Henry McCullough?" No. "Well, go and meet him and have a chat. Stick around him for a few days."

Denny joins in. "People have got to bend a little with us. You know… 'I only play the blues.'"
Paul: "We used to have to do a blues number every night that nobody particularly wanted to do, but Henry was a blues guitarist. It used to be like… Henry's diary –he'd come back from the dentist and he'd go… [*breaks into agonised blues vocals with Denny joining in*]… *'I been to the dentist, I got my fucking tooth out!'* And we're sitting around saying, 'Yeah man, yeah man.' It's just not what we're into, so it came to a head…

"Well," says Linda, "they are into it, but not Henry's blues."

"I just think,' says Paul, offering some perspective, "it just was down to the fact that Henry wasn't right for us."

Of Jimmy McCulloch, who's well-known for his explosiveness, they are reluctant to comment, though he wasn't sacked, as has been widely supposed. "We used to get a lot more paranoiac about it. Like you said –'God, there's someone else gone, we can't hold a group together.' But that's just imagination. It could also be that Joe missed America and that Jimmy and we didn't really fit, though he's very good. I'd be the first to say he's good. I really wouldn't want to slag him off."

OK, but there are obvious difficulties for any musician that joins a band with you in it. Your past record alone is enough to inspire awe in any musician.

Paul nods, but… "There are advantages to it, too. When you say it like that, it sounds as if it's a real drag to join our group, but there's advantages. Eric Stewart said to me the other day, 'I bet people are embarrassed to play with you.' I said, 'What about you? You're bloody 10cc.'

"And Jagger... Christ. I'm not the only one around like, who's done something. Stevie Wonder... what do people think coming up and drumming for Stevie Wonder? But if they're good drummers they don't think anythin', and if they're paranoid little freaks they'll be paranoid little freaks. Stevie Wonder's not about to say 'I better leave the business 'cos I'm too overwhelming for everyone.' He's just great. I'll drum with him, I tell you. But that's just my personality. I wouldn't be frightened of him.

"You gotta remember, Ringo was intimidated by the rest of The Beatles at the very beginning, because Ringo came in from another group and we were a group already, a big Liverpool group, and he was like in one of the secondary Liverpool groups, The Hurricanes, and he was, well, intimidated. In fact, so intimidated that he played lousy on the first session we did, and got blown off. But that didn't mean it was the end of Ringo. It didn't mean all the rest of us had to say, 'Well, maybe we're overpowering the poor lad.'

"It's not the way it works. You just have to keep going. You just gotta blast on through. You can't stop to think of all that stuff. No way."

McCARTNEY PUTS DOWN his reasons for forming Wings to merely wanting to get back to a playing band again. Simply that fact alone. "You can't have a play and a sing without a band unless you become an Andy Williams and take around session men, and that's not how I am."

John Lennon called a press conference in Tokyo to announce that he was doing nothing. A perfectly understandable attitude after all his achievements that few would begrudge. I wondered that Paul still found the urge, the incentive to continue. He has, after all, won every award in the book, broken all the records, and presumably gained financial security for several lifetimes. Why battle on?

"It's just one thing. It's just that, for me. I like to do it. If anything sounds trite, that does, but I actually like to do it. I can just see that in print [*big grimace*], but that's what it's about for me."

No, he's no idea whether Lennon will come back again.

"I get the feeling people try to play me against John, but it's not like that. It's just the way I do it and he's made the decision to fuck it. I've tried not bothering to do it, and then I got fed up doing nothing. And then it's harder to go back to it. It's like taking a vow of silence."

He's in occasional touch with the other Beatles now – George and Ringo more than John. Amazingly, all the legal squabbles that followed rapidly on the Beatles split are still going on, still the subject of delicate negotiation at New York's Plaza Hotel.

"The personal thing I would like to get sorted out so everyone's got their bit and everyone says thank you, and then it's just down to whether you like each other. The trouble is, whenever we meet people we all try not to talk about Apple. If we ever do it, it becomes weird. We all sit there feeling really heavy in de belly, man."

And what, dare I ask, is his view of all the nostalgia that's been going on ever since? EMI reissuing records all over the place, plays both here and in the States about The Beatles, and now the Rutles parody.

"It's good, y'know. I wouldn't say it's nostalgic, but I quite like to hear it all 'cos it's about me. When The Beatles were going, they were parodying us on knickers, and we were parodied in Madame Tussauds. And we were being parodied on the cover of *Life*. That was parody and this is parody. It's just funny the way it's kept going. But then, that was to be expected... I think we did quite a bit of good stuff."

At first he admits there was a feeling in Wings that they had to fight through the Beatles legend before they could truly establish the new group. Now they don't see any rivalry at all, and Paul is very proud of all the records Wings have made. For a long time he hated *Wild Life*, but he's even got to like that now, while going along with the consensus of opinion that *Band On The Run* has been the best they've made... "until this one". He wouldn't like to make a final judgement just yet about whether *London Town* had surpassed *Band On The Run*.

"NOBODY WAS TALKING ABOUT IRELAND AND THE KILLING"
LINDA McCARTNEY

Denny and Linda seem to become a bit fidgety as the attention has focused on Paul for a while. Denny has put his feet on the table with a loud bang [*which completely fails to interrupt Paul's flow of chat*], while Linda turns to Denny and says, "I don't think he likes me. They never do, y'know?"

The subject has now turned, almost inevitably, to punk. Its ideology, I tell him, was partly to shove from their eminence bands like ELP and themselves. But he doesn't agree. While liking a lot of the music involved in it – he turns out to be quite an admirer of The Damned and the Sex Pistols – he doesn't believe there's any ideology behind it.

Linda in '78: "How can you be ashamed of a song! Spare me!"

"I'd say it's just young bands playing, that's all. I don't agree with all that stuff about [*adapts booming semi-American commentator's voice*] 'PUNK IS REVOLUTIONARY.' That's what they said about The Beatles. The Beatles [*commentator's voice again*] is an attempt to get off the Palladium stage and back on to the thingy. And then [*normal Scouse burr*] another few weeks and we were playing the Palladium. There's nothin' wrong with the Palladium, really. It wasn't that. It was just a young band coming up. All this analysis is rubbish."

Does that mean, then, that you don't believe it's valid to have politics in music – there has, with one major exception, been scarcely any of it in Wings music? "I don't believe all that stuff about social awareness, I really don't. I mean, I'm still for total fairness and women to have votes and equal pay, for kids to have jobs and for everyone to get it right for a change."

Linda is shouting, "Bureaucracy is killing the world – get rid of all these paper-pushers!"

"So we're a socially aware group," continues Paul. "But that's not what our music's about."

But hang on. The major exception is "Give Ireland Back To The Irish". A directly political statement, which got banned and caused all manner of controversy, including, apparently, a physical assault on Henry McCullough. Linda starts to sing "*Give Ireland back to the Irish,*" as I ask whether putting out that song was a mistake, especially as it was a single. There's a chorus of "no ways"...

"Listen," says Linda. "Nobody was talking about Ireland. Everybody's getting killed and they never say, 'We're meeting tomorrow and we'll solve this problem.'"

"For me, it was that I'd never identified with the government before," says Paul. "I wasn't in the war. I grew up when you don't really bother whether it's Hugh Gaitskell or Clement Attlee [*gasps of amazement all around*]. I'd never identified with my government before when some of my paratroopers went in and shot a few... just people in the streets. I suddenly identified with my government and thought, 'Uh uh, oh no!'"

The experience with that song wouldn't dissuade them from doing something equally direct again if the mood took them, but they say it's incredibly difficult to do it – you can't force it.

"I like being banned," says Paul. "It's great, there's something really great about getting the authorities to side against you."

"Yeah," agrees Linda. "Getting Mary Whitehouse in a tizzy. God, she's unreasonable."

Paul stops dead. "Oh God, I can just see it on the front page. WINGS SPEAK OUT. Mary Whitehouse, social awareness, punk."

"What about Abba?" asks Linda.

"Oh yeah," says Paul. "We gotta do Abba. Abba – the thinking man's Manhattan Transfer."

BARRY PLUMMER

RELEASE DATE
MARCH 31
1978

WINGS

LONDON TOWN

From the Virgin Islands to the Mull Of Kintyre: a productive odyssey.

BY MICHAEL BONNER

WHERE WAS PAUL McCartney's head at in 1978? According to the song titles on *London Town*, he had become a restless spirit. Taken literally, new songs indicated either a desire for travel – "Café On The Left Bank", "Backwards Traveller" – or a dissatisfaction with the status quo: "I've Had Enough", "Don't Let It Bring You Down". Transition was required – plans for change needed. It was a curious mindset, especially considering McCartney was currently enjoying his most successful patch since the dissolution of The Beatles. 1976's *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* spent 23 weeks on the album chart while two singles from the album, "Silly Love Songs" and "Let 'Em In", both reached No 2 in the UK. The album reached No 1 in the States; its success mirrored later in the year by the triple live album, *Wings Over America*. The mischievous *Thrillington*, meanwhile, provided an outlet for his experimental creative impulses. It had been quite a year. So what had gone wrong?

On February, 7, 1977, Wings decamped to Abbey Road where, during the next month, they made steady work on five songs including "Name And Address", "London Town" and "Children Children". A plan to revisit the States for more live shows was scuppered when Linda McCartney learned she was pregnant. Making the most of the free time available to them, the band took up residence on St John in the US Virgin Islands. McCartney hired three yachts, all stationed at the island's Watermelon Bay. The McCartney family requisitioned *El Toro*, while the rest of the band stayed on *Samala*; the third, *Fair Carol*, was equipped with a 24-track recording studio. Sessions began on May 2. Home movie footage from the 2001 *Wingspan* documentary shows the band at work and at play in this bucolic Caribbean setting. Here's Paul and Linda in the sea waving at the camera, there's Paul and Denny Laine recording vocals at sunset, and now witness the full band jamming on deck in all their Hawaiian-shirted, sunburned glory. Reflecting their surroundings, a proposed title for the album-in-progress was 'Water Wings'.

Alas, the Caribbean's warm glow didn't last. In September 1977, Jimmy McCulloch left the band – conflicting reports suggest the guitarist had fallen out with McCartney, either over money or drugs (McCulloch died from a suspected overdose in 1979). Shortly after McCulloch's departure, Joe English's wife, Dayle, was badly injured in a car accident and the drummer returned full-time to America. Back to the core trio of the McCartneys and Laine, Wings spent a day in August at Spirit Of Ranachan Studio on the McCartneys' High Park Farm. The new song they recorded there was, McCartney later explained in *Wingspan*, "a love song to the area where we were living". Coupled with the birth of their son, James, on September 12, the overwhelming success of "Mull Of Kintyre" appeared to sweep aside the band's recent upheavals. Returning to Abbey Road in October for more sessions and overdubs, the album was finally finished on January 28 – almost a year since work first began.

If 1977 had been a year of change for McCartney and Wings, some of that disruption is reflected in the album's fidgety mix of styles and unfulfilled ideas. Across 14 songs, *London Town* offers a confused mix of rock'n'roll, rockabilly, folky ballads, country rock and a synth-reggae hybrid. There is a detour to Paris, while one song rhymes *"lead guitarist"* with *"Epping Forest"* and another contains such homespun wisdom as *"if you want good eggs, you've got to feed that hen"*. Tonally, *London Town* is lighthearted, affectionate; moving between fairy-tale whimsy and more straightforward emotional warmth.

The album opens on familiar ground. "London Town" is a story song populated by a barker, policemen and an out-of-work actor. Typically, the melodic shifts are playful and nimble, the whole thing rounded off by a gorgeous closing harmony. Meanwhile, the punchy, urgent rhythms of "Café On The Left Bank" are almost New Wave-ish. Indeed, McCartney's stuttered *"C-c-c-c-café"* is an affectation worthy of Costello (*London Town* was released two weeks after *This Year's Model*).

LONDON TOWN

CRITICS' VERDICT

"*London Town*, then, is a positive reaction to McCartney's limp phase… and although it's not a set that bears comparison to *Band On The Run*, it is nonetheless a fine album, with McCartney producing odd flashes of his undoubted genius."

HARRY DOHERTY, *MELODY MAKER*, APRIL 1, 1978

"In a way, it's possible to see Wings as a continuing, brilliantly realised piece of nostalgia. They represent The Beatles as softies would like to remember them – minus much of the wit, the aggression, the weirdness and the insights of the original model."

BOB EDMANDS, *NME*, APRIL 8, 1978

He flips into acoustic ballad mode for "I'm Carrying", which is draped in familiar "Yesterday"-style strings. It's a beautiful number, delivered with warmth and intimacy and evidently directed at Linda: *"By dawn's first light, I'll come back to your room again/With my carnation hidden by the packages."* Taken together, these first three songs showcase McCartney's skills as a songwriter, but there's little sense he's pushing himself creatively.

Then something weird happens. "Backwards Traveller" suddenly stops after 1:08. It's followed by a brief instrumental, "Cuff Link" – *that* synth-reggae hybrid. Both songs date from the final sessions at the end of 1977 – which perhaps explains their hurried, unfinished qualities. It's as if McCartney, caught up with a new baby, is distracted from the work in hand. But those same sessions also gave rise to "I'm Carrying" – a more cohesive attempt to channel McCartney's current domestic preoccupations. The folksy "Children Children" is one of two accomplished songs sung by Laine. Centred around children playing in a forest by a waterfall, Laine adopts a bright, ringing tenor reminiscent of George Harrison. He takes lead duties again on the wonderful "Deliver Your Children", a loose attempt at country rock with a sprightly chorus and shaggy dog lyrics. Tantalisingly, they both suggest another, bolder road not taken for *London Town*.

The album continues to shift gears. "With A Little Luck", finds McCartney fleshing out his Wings-era soft rock palette with discrete and well-crafted synth lines. An early take exists without the synth and vocal overdubs that exposes McCartney's songwriting skills at their rawest. Originally written for Michael Jackson, "Girlfriend" is an R&B ballad delivered in part in falsetto by McCartney (Jackson eventually covered it on *Off The Wall*). Dating from the *Fair Carol* sessions, bluesy rocker "I've Had Enough" finds McCartney articulating his dissatisfaction – perhaps with Wings – in lines like *"I earn the money and you take it away"*. He attempts to be similarly acerbic on "Famous Groupies", where the grimy exploits of his fellow musicians are sugar-coated as witty vignettes. It's not a patch on George Harrison's "Apple Scruffs". "Name And Address", meanwhile, is a brisk rockabilly clip complete with Sun-era guitar reverb. The gorgeous "Don't Let It Bring You Down" privileges a woodsy, Fairport vibe before the album closes with "Morse Moose And The Grey Goose" – a six-minute plus progressive multi-part suite.

At its close, *London Town* had covered a lot of ground – but what had it achieved? Considering its difficult genesis, perhaps the fact it was released at all is good enough. Wings never really recovered. A new lineup was assembled as the *London Town* promotional cycle came to a close, but it marked the start of Wings' final flight.

TRACKMARKS LONDON TOWN

1 London Town ★★★
2 Café On The Left Bank ★★★
3 I'm Carrying ★★★★
4 Backwards Traveller ★★
5 Cuff Link ★
6 Children Children ★★★★
7 Girlfriend ★★★
8 I've Had Enough ★★★
9 With A Little Luck ★★★
10 Famous Groupies ★★
11 Deliver Your Children ★★★★
12 Name And Address ★★
13 Don't Let It Bring You Down ★★★★
14 Morse Moose And The Grey Goose ★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Abbey Road Studios, London; AIR Studios, London; *Fair Carol*, St John, US Virgin Islands
Personnel: Paul McCartney (bass, vocals, drums, percussion, guitar, violin, keyboards, flageolet), Linda McCartney (keyboards, percussion, vocals), Denny Laine (guitar, bass, flageolet, recorder, percussion, vocals), Jimmy McCulloch (guitar, backing vocals), Joe English (drums, percussion)
Highest chart position: UK 4; US 2

RELEASE DATE
JUNE 11
1979

WINGS

BACK TO THE EGG

One more fleeting lineup, and one last flight for Wings. "It was getting a bit boring, to tell the truth."

BY TERRY STAUNTON

THE END OF the '60s found Paul McCartney challenging mogul Allen Klein's control of The Beatles, as the band spent their last days in the studio together recording *Abbey Road*, before filing papers to dissolve the Fab Four's partnership the following year. A decade later and his old adversary Klein was serving a jail sentence for tax evasion, Macca had secured a new US contract with Columbia making him the highest paid musician in the world, but once again he was soon to be making his last music with a group.

Wings had always – perhaps through fault rather than design – been a revolving-door proposition, personnel changes continually hampering their development as a cohesive unit. Having made 1978's *London Town* as a core trio (Paul, Linda, Denny Laine), fresh blood was sought for the next album, with a view to future touring. Laine brought both guitarist Laurence Juber and drummer Steve Holley to the party; the former had impressed him in the house band of David Essex's TV show, while the latter, who'd previously worked with Elton John, gave an impromptu audition for the McCartneys while jamming at a party thrown by one of Denny's friends.

The new working unit was in place but, as McCartney admitted a few years later, his heart wasn't really in it. "It was getting a bit boring, to tell the truth," he said. "I was getting a bit fed up with yet another lineup. Even though they were good players, my enthusiasm had peaked."

Back To The Egg seemed beset by power games from the start. Having come up with the catchy dance vibes of "Goodnight Tonight", McCartney hesitated over making it a stand-alone single, the first release by the new lineup, and challenged his bandmates to come up with something over a weekend that could instead be the debut. Come Monday, after all four (including Linda) had toiled away on prospective material, McCartney announced they'd be going with his song after all.

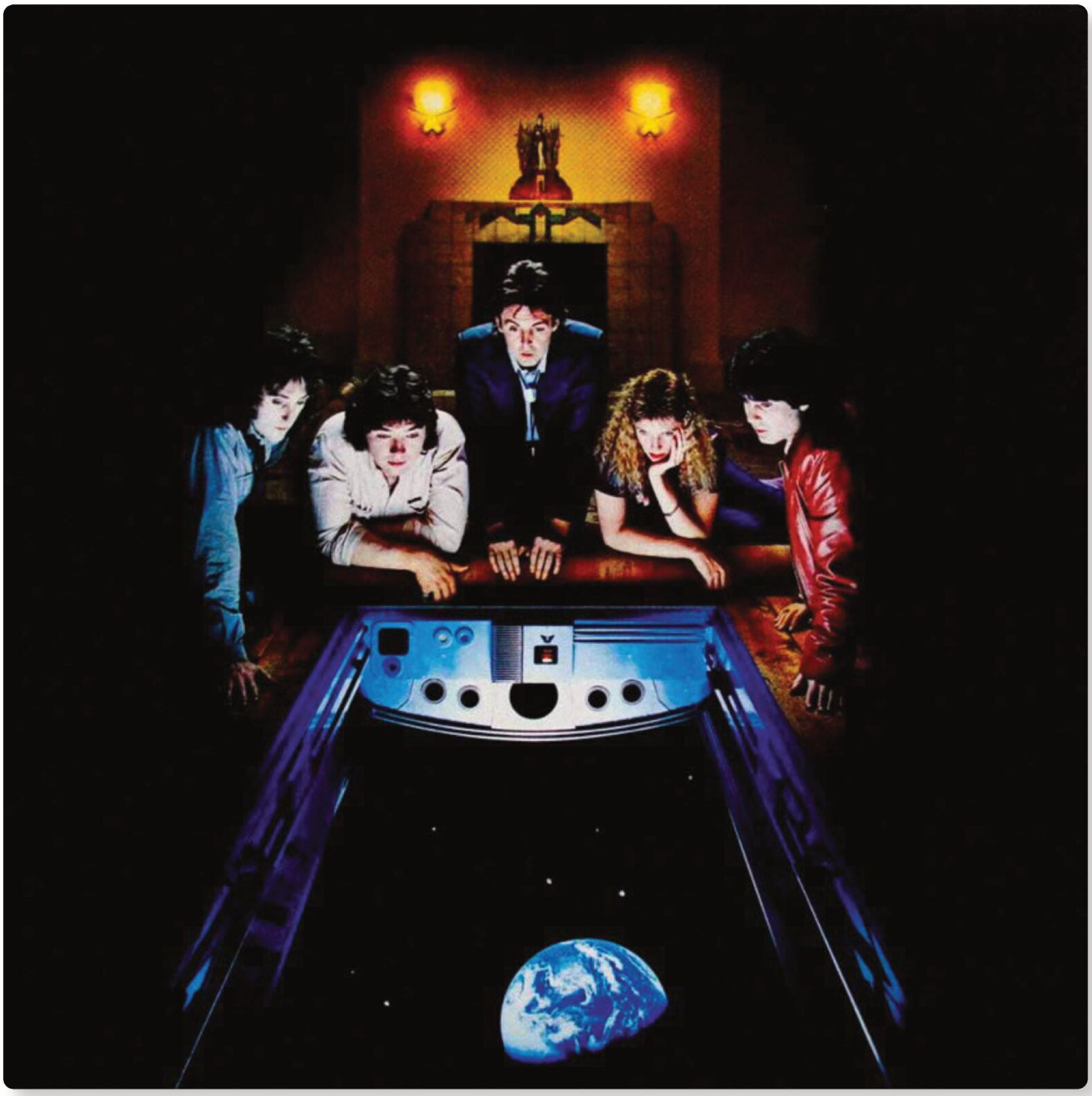
> BACK TO THE EGG SEEMED BESET BY POWER GAMES FROM THE START

Holley also had his nose put out of joint when, after coming up with the crunching guitar figure that would ultimately form the backbone of "Old Siam, Sir", Laine claimed credit for the riff when it was presented to the boss.

It didn't help the album's identity that recordings were spread out over almost an entire year at four separate locations. Unlike his Beatles days, McCartney couldn't guarantee that Abbey Road would always be available to him, and when EMI's new wonder girl Kate Bush block-booked the St John's Wood complex for weeks on end it prompted him to build a scaled-down copy of the studio in the basement of his Soho offices, which he called Replica. Other sessions took place at the McCartneys' Scottish farmhouse studios and, closer to their home in Peasmarsh, at Lympne Castle – where McCartney invited owners Harold and Deirdre Margary to read obscure literary texts over the plodding funk of "Reception" and the lush orchestration of "The Broadcast".

Originally envisioned as a double album, McCartney seemed to lose confidence in such sonic experiments, although the howling rocker and first single, "Old Siam, Sir", which drew comparisons with Steve Marriott from some critics, was clearly not typical Wings fare. The power pop and soaring harmonies of "Getting Closer" was much more in keeping with the template of what went before, and Macca again reverted to type on the sweet-toothed Vaudevillian jazz of "Baby's Request".

Perhaps wary of ruffling feathers among his new American paymasters at Columbia, "Old Siam,



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Apart from the distinguishing mark of his own vocals and occasionally an outstanding song, the band offers nothing inspiring… this pleasant album gets Wings nowhere."

RAY COLEMAN, MELODY MAKER, JUNE 9, 1979

"This is the sturdiest, the least twee and the most rigorous offering we've had from Wings in much too many years, probably since *Band On The Run*. …*Back To The Egg* is just more of Paul McCartney getting on with what he does best, and what he does best he can do better than just about anybody."

PAUL DU NOYER, NME, JUNE 9, 1979

Sir" didn't see 45 action in the US, where the soporific and synth-heavy faux Philly soul of "Arrow Through Me" was chosen as the lead-off single. But in truth, Columbia were already smarting at Paul's decision to leave "Goodnight Tonight" off the album. It had reached the Top 5 on both sides of the Atlantic, and was seen as the perfect curtain-raiser; "Arrow Through Me" ultimately fell short of the Top 20.

The overriding impression is of McCartney flitting through various moods, the most prevalent being boredom and playfulness. The latter is best evidenced on "Rockestra Theme", on which he invited numerous contemporaries (including Hank Marvin, Pete Townshend, Dave Gilmour, John Paul Jones, Ronnie Lane, John Bonham and Kenney Jones) to join him on a lumbering, largely instrumental piece that was part big band homage, part attempt to mimic Jeff Lynne's epic pop constructs with ELO. The result was half-formed and half-hearted, unwittingly becoming shorthand for the album as a whole.

Although *Back To The Egg* reached the Top 10 in both the UK and the US, just nudging over a million sales in America, it was deemed a comparative failure when held up to such juggernauts as *Band On The Run* and *Wings At The Speed Of Sound*. The UK tour that began three months after its release, with overseas dates to be finalised the following year, was geared towards extending the record's chart life, and the decision to kick off the jaunt in Liverpool garnered acres of press.

However, Wings took to the road noticeably under-rehearsed and the reviews were less than glowing. In Tom Doyle's 2013 book, *Man On The Run: Paul McCartney In The 1970s*, Steve Holley suggested Macca hated the tour, and after a particularly below-par performance in Brighton told him the show "stank".

Growing tired of his current band set-up, McCartney still had to deal with the spectre of his more famous first group, not least when United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim urged him to reunite with The Beatles for a benefit show for the victims of war in Kampuchea. John Lennon rejected the plea immediately, although both George Harrison and Ringo Starr agreed to make appearances of some sort – but both pulled out as media speculation of a full-on reunion mushroomed. Ultimately, the gig, one of four staged at the Hammersmith Odeon in the last week of December '79, became a Wings show – and, as it turned out, thanks to McCartney's arrest at Japanese customs, the last ever Wings show.

TRACKMARKS BACK TO THE EGG

1 Reception ★★
2 Getting Closer ★★★★
3 We're Open Tonight ★★★
4 Spin It On ★★★
5 Again And Again And Again ★★
6 Old Siam, Sir ★★★★
7 Arrow Through Me ★★★
8 Rockestra Theme ★★★
9 To You ★★
10 After The Ball/ Million Miles ★★★
11 Winter Rose/Love Awake ★★★
12 The Broadcast ★★
13 So Glad To See You Here ★★★
14 Baby's Request ★★★

Label: Parlophone (UK)/ Columbia (US)
Produced by: Paul McCartney & Chris Thomas
Recorded at: Spirit Of Ranachan Studios, Campbeltown; Lympne Castle, Kent; Abbey Road, London; Replica Studios, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, guitar, bass, piano, harpsichord), Linda McCartney (keyboards, backing vocals), Denny Laine (guitars, vocals), Laurence Juber (guitars), Steve Holley (drums), Harold & Dierdre Margary (book readings), Black Dyke Mills Band (horns on "Love Awake"), additional players on "Rockestra Theme" and "So Glad To See You Here" include Hank Marvin, Pete Townshend, Dave Gilmour (guitars), Gary Brooker, John Paul Jones (keyboards), Ronnie Lane, Bruce Thomas (bass), John Bonham, Kenney Jones (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 6; US 8

RELEASE DATE
MAY 16
1980

PAUL McCARTNEY

McCARTNEY II

Coming back up… Down on the farm, away from Wings, McCartney experiments with his new synths.

BY JON DALE

OUT OF ALL of Paul McCartney's solo albums, *McCartney II* might have the most intriguing provenance. In some ways, it was the album that almost never was. Having said that, it was initially assembled as a broad-ranging double, before McCartney was convinced to edit it down to a manageable single slab of vinyl. Released in 1980, it was actually recorded in mid-1979, at home, plugging direct into the Studer 16-track he'd hired to record in a farmhouse on his East Sussex estate; eventually, he also recorded in the studio at his Scotland farm. After finishing these exploratory recordings, McCartney prepared for Wings' early 1980 tour of Japan: the story of his subsequent bust for possession of marijuana, and his nine days in jail, is already well documented. In a roundabout way, the incident signed off on Wings' weird, wild career; it also led McCartney to release his home recordings as *McCartney II*.

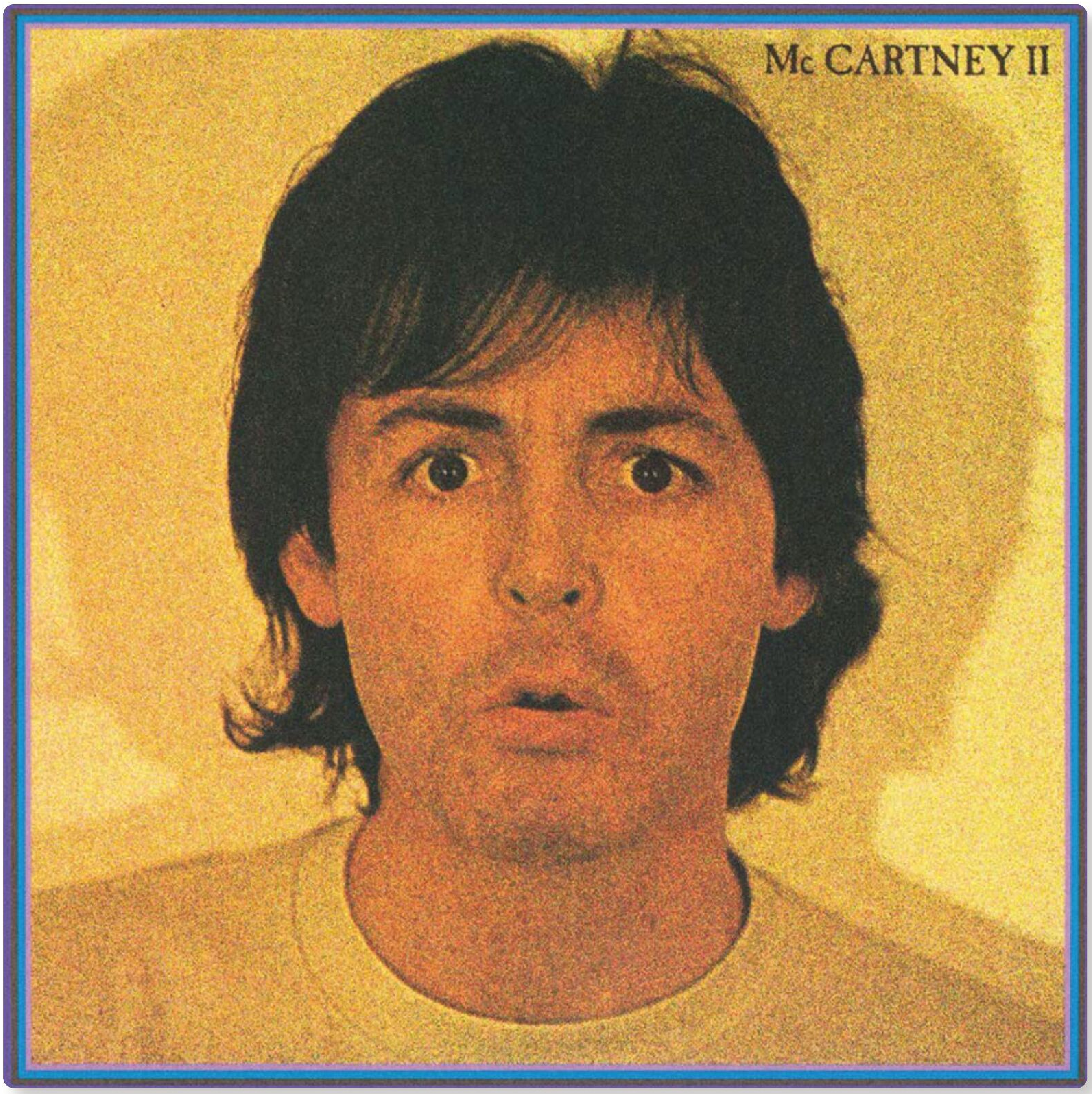
The connection with his previous, home-recorded debut solo album, *McCartney*, seems more about circumstance and a vague psychological link than any aesthetic thread. If McCartney was bucolic and relaxed, *McCartney II* is feverish at times, playful, a bit stroppy, and, in many ways, born of technological change. In an interview in online publication *The Quietus*, coinciding with the 2011 reissue of the album, McCartney told Stephen Dalton, "I really just was fascinated with these things called synthesisers which had appeared on the scene – particularly with sequencers, I loved them. It was new technology and I just wanted to see what it was all about, and have a go, and see what I could do with it… I'm still experimenting, y'know?" More than anything else, this set the tone for *McCartney II* – experimenting with synthesisers and sequencers, finding new ways to 'be McCartney', and throwing a few curveballs just to keep the lazy listener on their toes.

McCartney II kicks off with its lead single, the irrepressible "Coming Up". After the longueurs of recent Wings material, it's the first sign that McCartney's been paying attention to what's been happening in modern music: as others have observed, the song's minimalism and choppy, string-bean guitars are a dead ringer for Talking Heads. It's a great reminder that when McCartney sets his mind to it, he can essay a great, uncomplicated pop song that's, nonetheless, deceptive in its simplicity: as with much of *McCartney II*, close listening reveals all kinds of fascinating incident scratched into the song's margins.

As if to prove that Wings weren't a great vehicle for some of his material, the live in Glasgow version of "Coming Up", on the single B-side, is too florid and epic. The intimacy of the home-recorded version is far more potent. (It's also worth watching the hilarious video on YouTube, if only to catch McCartney's pitch-perfect impersonation of Russell Mael of Sparks.)

From "Coming Up", *McCartney II* delivers the first of its many curveballs with "Temporary Secretary". If "Coming Up" plays to McCartney's populism, "Temporary Secretary" has him digging deep into new technology, pulling a dotty arpeggiated pattern out of the equipment, drums crashing and clattering as McCartney delivers one of his wildest vocal performances. Polarising on its initial release, the song was eventually picked up by the dance music community, and was subsequently compiled onto New Religion's *A Secret History* collection of synthpop classics, alongside artists like Throbbing Gristle, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Visage

> THE THRILLS HERE COME FROM McCARTNEY'S GENTLY BENT, ELECTRONIC EXPERIMENTS



CRITICS' VERDICT

"*McCartney II* isn't worth the plastic it's printed on. Neither is Paul, but he'll go on doodling and fooling his public because they're too frightened to ditch him and his past and he's too rich to be stopped."

DANNY BAKER, NME, JUNE 21, 1980

and Bill Laswell's Material. From here, the slight but charming blues sting of "On The Way" leads into "Waterfalls", the album's second single, and one of McCartney's most tender ballads. Levitating on piano and occasional textural flecks from electronics and acoustic guitar, it's almost hallucinatory in its breathless gentleness.

From here, *McCartney II* bifurcates in spirit, and moves about in an alternating structure. On the one hand, lovely, spirited, and at times goofy pop. On the other, home-made and gently bent electronic experiments, which tickle the cochlea like an ADD version of the miniatures on Eno's 1975 album, *Another Green World*. The former are enjoyable enough: "Nobody Knows"'s 12-bar blues stutter is made surreal by some fantastically messy, giddy production touches; the closing "One Of These Days" is the album's true heartbreaker, McCartney alone with an acoustic guitar, singing out his melancholy, deep in the maw of the bittersweet moment. But the thrills come from McCartney's electronic play. "Frozen Jap" is a wistful gem, its cod-Oriental theme weaving through hole-punch beats. "Summer's Day Song" pushes a rudimentary rhythm box through effects, while a happy-sad melody pings out amongst alien drones, almost like McCartney trying his hand at library music. And "Darkroom" is a slippery, crotchety beast, Krautrock-esque in its metronomic pulse and ticklish, watery textures.

Great though it is, *McCartney II* only tells half of the story of this, one of the most playful, experimental phases of McCartney's career. To get the full lowdown, you really need to pick up the 2009 remastered double-CD of the album. Unlike the contemporaneous reissue of *McCartney*, whose bonus disc was full of unneeded detritus, *McCartney II* warrants serious attention for a small clutch of B-sides and unreleased songs that show just how much hypnotic pleasure McCartney was getting out of electronic circuitry. In particular, "Secret Friend", originally released on the flipside of the limited "Temporary Secretary" 12", is a monster, a pulsing, swooping, 10-minute proto-electronica epic, where McCartney somehow channels the graceful see-saw of Manuel Göttsching's *E2-E4* (which wasn't to be recorded until 1981), reinforcing its circular motion with a high, reedy vocal incantation, soaring over the top of the electronics.

Hidden gems like "Secret Friend" make you wonder just what might have happened had *McCartney II* been released as originally intended, as a sprawling double album mopping up all the material from the sessions. It could have been a real contender, a masterpiece hiding in plain sight. As it stands, *McCartney II*'s relative brevity plays to another of its strengths – a miniaturist's dream, play and risk packed into boxy instrumentals, joyous genre exercises and, on occasion, moments of melodic rapture. It's a great, quick fix from an artist finding their way through a new technological paradigm, but refusing to bury their melodic nous.

TRACKMARKS McCARTNEY II

1 Coming Up ★★★★
2 Temporary Secretary ★★★★
3 On The Way ★★★
4 Waterfalls ★★★★
5 Nobody Knows ★★★
6 Front Parlour ★★★★
7 Summer's Day Song ★★★
8 Frozen Jap ★★★★
9 Bogey Music ★★
10 Darkroom ★★★
11 One of These Days ★★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: home
Personnel: Paul McCartney (all instruments), Linda McCartney (additional vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 3

RELEASE DATE
APRIL 26
1982

PAUL McCARTNEY

TUG OF WAR

On the cusp of 40, reeling from the death of John Lennon, McCartney returns as the serious solo artist (with a little help from his friends). BY PIERS MARTIN

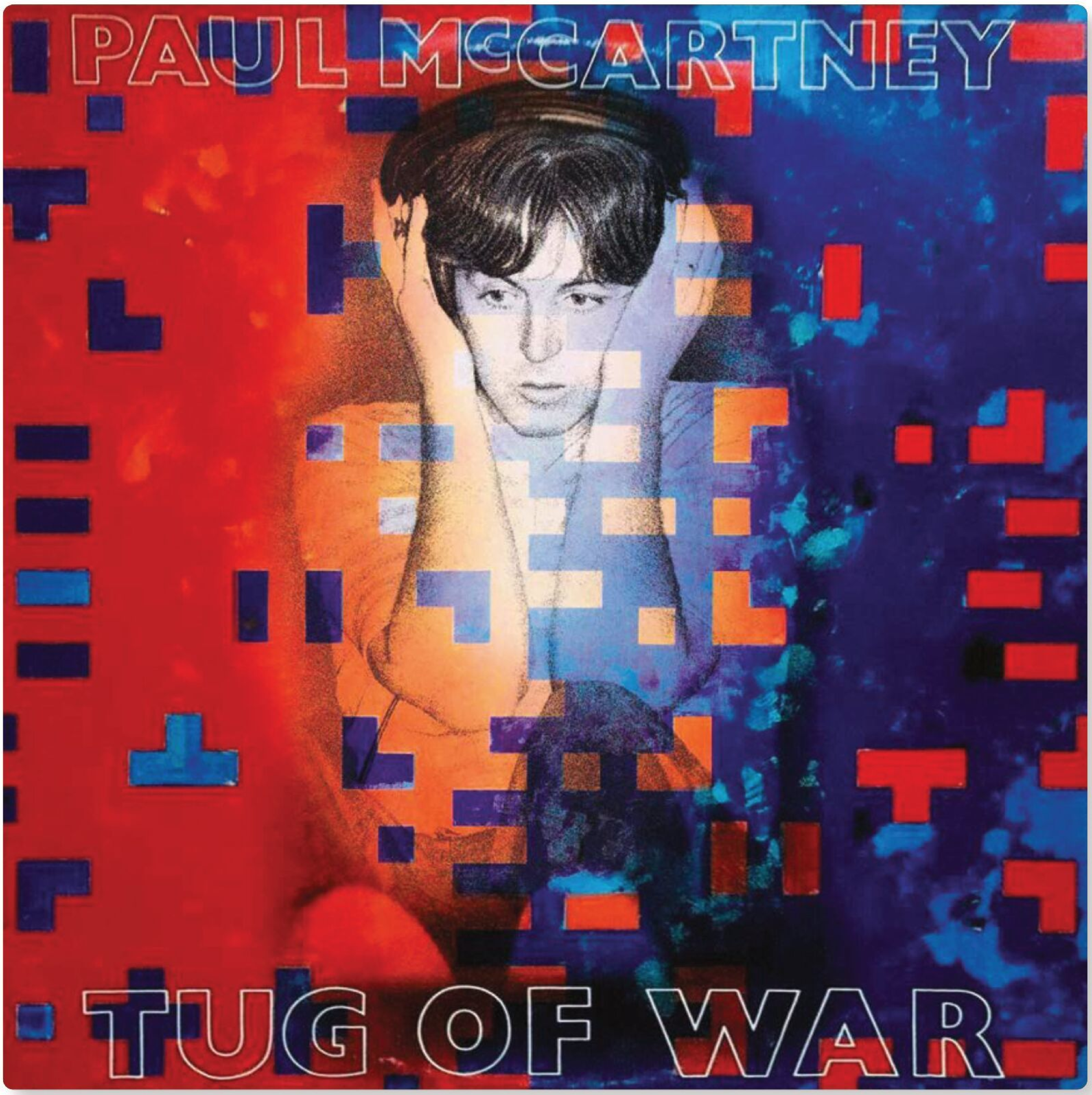
1981 WAS A notable year for Paul McCartney: it was the first one since 1962 in which he did not release a record. This afforded him space to breathe and time to reflect on the shock of John Lennon's assassination and the ungainly demise of Wings – and to wipe the slate clean, in a fashion, after the eccentric pick'n'mix of *McCartney II*. With no intention of assembling another band – and any meaningful Beatles reunion now out of the question – *Tug Of War*, it was hoped, would mark a new chapter for McCartney after the topsy-turvy '70s as he set sail for calmer waters, a serious solo artist on the cusp of 40.

Fortunately, it did just that: *Tug Of War* was adored by a sympathetic public partly still grieving for Lennon, and reached No 1 in the US and UK in its week of release in April '82, the last time he would achieve this double on his own. Crafted carefully rather than knocked out on a whim, each of its dozen songs illustrate why McCartney is a master of the pop form. From "Tug Of War" to "Ebony And Ivory" and his touching Lennon tribute "Here Today", a staple in every concert, this is exhibition stuff from McCartney, sentimental and silly, of course, but also profound and richly melodic. The way he swerves into unexpected medleys on "Ballroom Dancing" and "Dress Me Up As A Robber" shows he was always looking to make a song as exciting as possible.

Whether or not the two-year gap between releases suggested Macca felt pressured to deliver an album worthy of the world's leading songwriter, as he had effectively become following Lennon's death, the squad of players he called in for *Tug Of War* at least ensured he'd get the best results. Unshackled once more from the pettiness and personalities of band life, he realised he was in the privileged position to be able to cherry-pick practically any musician alive to perform on the album. This explains *Tug Of War* cameos for his teenage hero Carl Perkins, the rockabilly pioneer who wrote "Blue Suede Shoes" and duets with Macca on the rollicking "Get It", and prodigious US jazz-fusioneer Stanley Clarke, whose bass technique McCartney admired, though his nimble skills are somewhat underused on "The Pound Is Sinking" and "Somebody Who Cares". Ringo Starr squares up to superstar sticksman Steve Gadd in a battle of the drummers – and loses, kind of, only appearing on "Take It Away". Stevie Wonder rocks up for the peerless "Ebony And Ivory" and infectious six-minute synth-funk jam "What's That You're Doing?" (complete with a joyous run-out chant of "*She loves you, yeah yeah yeah!*"), while 10cc's Eric Stewart helped McCartney with subtle, multi-layered vocal arrangements on several cuts, not least the textured "*pushing, pulling*" backing on the opening title track and the creamy harmonies of "Take It Away".

> IN MANY WAYS, THIS IS A SHOW OF STRENGTH BY A WORLD-CLASS CHAMPION

Much of the album's appeal, particularly at the time, centres on the reunion of Beatles producer George Martin and McCartney, who'd last worked together in 1973 when Martin arranged orchestration for "Live And Let Die". Aware he'd been drifting through a fallow patch and that *McCartney II* had alienated some fans, McCartney recruited Martin to give direction to what would be the final Wings sessions in autumn 1980, with a view to him helming the next Wings album,



CRITICS' VERDICT

"*Tug Of War*, laboriously conceived and obsessively buffed to a pearly sheen, is the first Macca album since *Band On The Run* to present the sturdy Macca as an artist out to re-establish his credentials and remind not merely the dead rock critics who've needled him ceaselessly since The Beatles' demise, but also the potential gargantuan audience, that this man, only a month away from his 40th birthday, is still a contender."

NICK KENT, NME, MAY 1, 1982

"*Tug Of War* is proof that Macca, for all his self-indulgent faults, is still trying to put some kind of effort and imagination into his work. That it should all add up to an LP that isn't even offensive is besides the point."

PAUL O HEWITT, MM, MAY 1, 1982

slated to be a double. At McCartney's Sussex home that summer, McCartney and Denny Laine had worked through a dozen tracks that would eventually appear on *Tug Of War* and its successor *Pipes Of Peace*, the slightly corny yin-yang concept being that the former would explore ideas of conflict and the struggle of opposites – McCartney was keen to counter the accusations of flippancy often levelled at him – while the latter sought to offer positive solutions to the struggle. Under Martin's guidance, all the best tunes – and there are a few Macca classics here, each polished to perfection by Martin – ended up on *Tug Of War*, to the detriment of *Pipes Of Peace*.

Hampered by sluggish progress and a strained studio atmosphere, the Wings sessions of October and November 1980 proved deeply unsatisfying for Martin and McCartney and would ultimately lead to the official disbanding of that group on April 27, 1981. Starting afresh in December '80, work began in earnest on *Tug Of War* at Martin's AIR Studios in London, but was interrupted on the morning of December 9 when the news arrived of Lennon's murder in New York. Unsure what to do with himself, McCartney headed to the studio to work on B-side "Rainclouds". Asked how he felt that evening by a reporter, he famously replied, "It's a drag, innit?", an offhand remark deemed flippant by the media but likely more indicative of his heightened emotional state. Nevertheless, recording recommenced just five days later, on December 14. After a Christmas break, the team decamped to Martin's other AIR Studios on the Caribbean island of Montserrat for two months. For some reason, possibly its proximity to the US, the star guests lined up to join McCartney for this agreeable session. On returning to London for overdubs and mixing, 12 songs from 20 were selected for *Tug Of War*. One of the last to be recorded, at home alone in Sussex, was the "Yesterday"-like Lennon homage "Here Today", evidence, perhaps, that although Macca essentially writes the same old song, it's a good one. "*I still remember how it was before/And I am holding back the tears no more/I love you*", he pines as Martin's lush string arrangement swells around an acoustic guitar.

In many ways, *Tug Of War* is a show of strength by a world-class champion. Down but by no means out, McCartney's so-called comeback reveals a man at the peak of his powers with everything and nothing to prove.

TRACKMARKS TUG OF WAR

1 Tug Of War ★★★★★
2 Take It Away ★★★★
3 Somebody Who Cares ★★★★
4 What's That You're Doing? ★★★★
5 Here Today ★★★★
6 Ballroom Dancing ★★★★
7 The Pound Is Sinking ★★★★
8 Wanderlust ★★★★
9 Get It ★★★
10 Be What You See (Link) ★★★★
11 Dress Me Up As A Robber ★★★★
12 Ebony And Ivory ★★★★

Label: MPL, Parlophone
Producer: George Martin
Recorded at: AIR Studios, Montserrat, AIR Studios, London, The Mill, Sussex
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, gtr, bass, piano, synth, perc, vocoder), Linda McCartney (vocals), Denny Laine (gtr, synth, bass), Carl Perkins (vocals, gtr), Eric Stewart (vocals, gtr), Stanley Clarke (bass), Stevie Wonder (vocals, synth), George Martin (elec piano), Andy Mackay (Lyricon), Adrian Brett (pan pipes), Campbell Maloney (snare), Ringo Starr, Steve Gadd, Dave Mattacks, Adrian Sheppard (drums, perc), Jack Rothstein, Bernard Partridge (violin), Ian Jewel (viola), Keith Harvey (cello), Jack Brymer (clarinet), Peter Marshall (vocals), The Philip Jones Brass Ensemble (horns)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 1

RELEASE DATE
OCTOBER 31
1983

PAUL McCARTNEY

PIPES OF PEACE

The fractured flipside to Tug Of War. Involves Michael Jackson, Ringo Starr, George Martin – and even Denny Laine!

BY MARK BENTLEY

"I THINK THE RECORD industry is overproduced," McCartney told Liverpool fanzine *Breakout* in the summer of 1983. "Yesterday I had a shout-up because the pace we work at is so slow. Before you can even get a 48-track tape up, the engineer has to spend at least an hour to find out where he is. In the early days we only used to work with four-track, and we would record an album in a day..."

Pipes Of Peace, though, was an album three years in the making. While the title suggests a straightline companion piece to *Tug Of War*, *Pipes Of Peace* lacks that record's cohesion, and maybe a little of its inspiration, too. Despite the expensive-sounding production and extensive guestlist (Jacko, Ringo, Eric Stewart, Denny Laine), it feels more like an odds-and-ends compilation than a holistic album. And you can hear the joins.

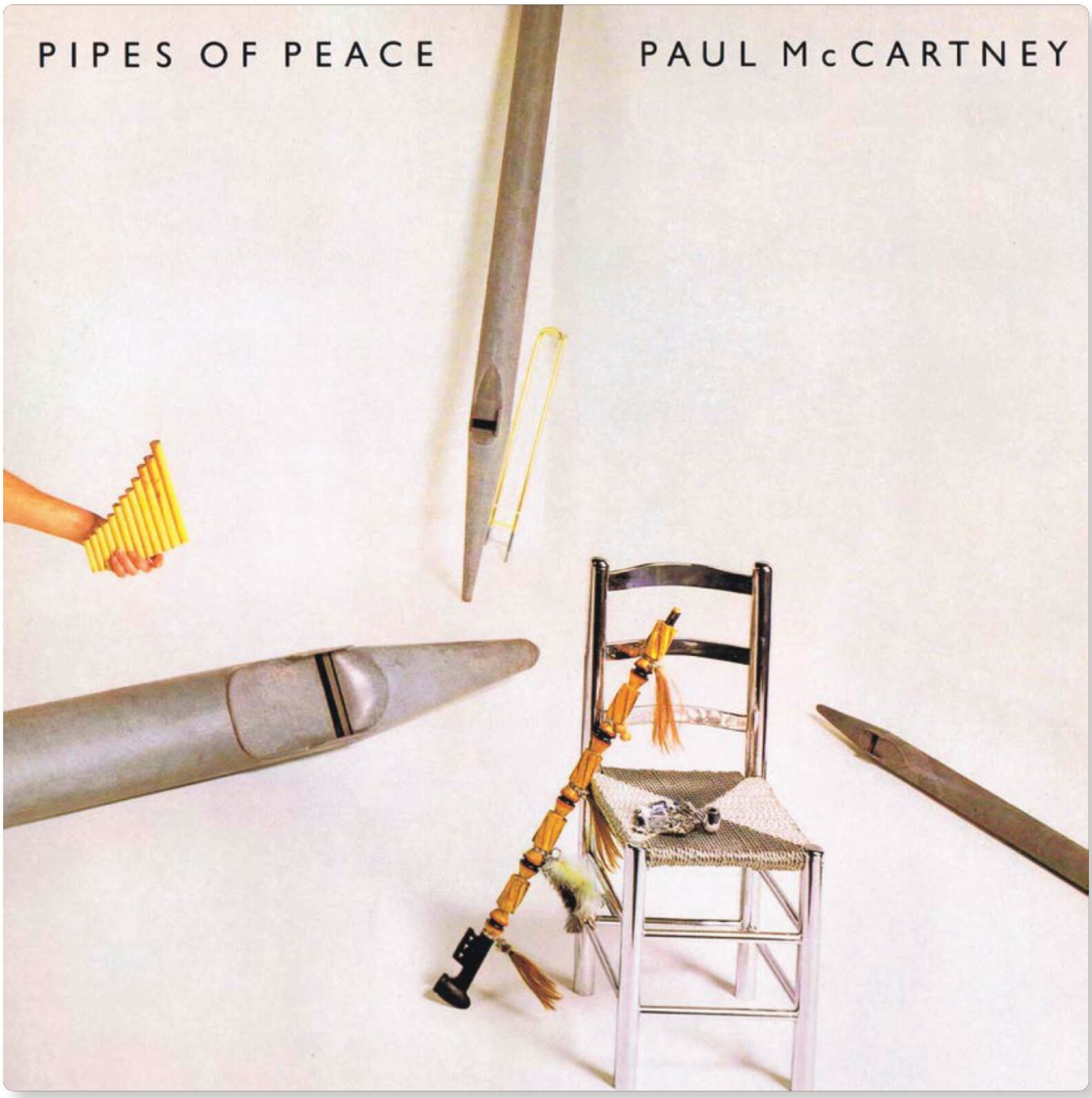
Many of the tracks here were actually recorded during the *Tug Of War* sessions in 1981 and '82, held over so *Tug Of War* could be fitted on a single disc. The two effervescent duets with Michael Jackson – "Say Say Say" and "The Man" – had been recorded at Abbey Road in 1981, a full year before the pair cut "The Girl Is Mine" for *Thriller*. The remainder – including the title track, "The Other Me", "So Bad", "Tug Of Peace" and "Through Our Love" – were laid down in September and October 1982 at Paul's Sussex farmhouse. Then came more delays. The release date was moved from February 1983 to late October, due to McCartney's extra-curricular activities, including filming for *Give My Regards To Broad Street*. The cover art is its own visual clue: there's Paul in scruffy white sneakers and baggy slacks... at 41, with more grey hair than he has now. If McCartney sounded frustrated in summer 1983, maybe he was. Working too hard, too slow, and not getting the good stuff out there.

And there is a lot of good stuff on *Pipes Of Peace*. Clean, sensible, melodic pop. The title track was a UK No 1, with its war-is-for-dummies message and footy-in-the trenches video. Ditto the infectious lead-off single "Say Say Say"; an inevitable and deserved worldwide hit in late '83. But if it's a while since you heard the full album, or indeed if you've never picked up *Pipes Of Peace* at all, the best tracks here may surprise you in their soulfulness.

Indeed, *Pipes Of Peace*'s true companion piece may not be *Tug Of War* at all, but Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. As producer George Martin told John Blaney for *Lennon & McCartney: Together Alone*: "Way back when we started *Tug Of War*, my thoughts to Paul were, 'Let's make a slightly harder, a more funky album than perhaps you have done in the past...'" *Pipes Of Peace* is a long, *long* way from funky, but Macca does the sweet soul man thing rather expertly on a number of key songs. "So Bad" has one of those irresistibly clean and cascading McCartney melodies; instantly classic. Vocally, Paul comes on like The Stylistics' Russell Thompkins Jr, confessing in faultless falsetto: "*There was a pain/But now you're here/And I don't fear a thing.*"

> ITS TRUE COMPANION PIECE MAY NOT BE *TUG OF WAR* BUT *THRILLER!*

More excellence is on show in the overlooked Jackson duet, "The Man". A kind of disco-pop corollary to Stevie Wonder's "He's Misstra



CRITICS' VERDICT

"McCartney has found himself in his middle years with a sudden realisation that he owes the world a living and conscience can be a dreadful burden ... His songwriting has degenerated to the point where he relies either on pseudo-Stevie Wonder constructions or collaborations with Messiah Jackson that spawn only wince-inducing inanities..."

HELEN FITZGERALD, MM, NOVEMBER 5, 1983

"A dull, tired and empty collection of quasi funk and gooey rock arrangements featuring the likes of Stanley Clarke, Michael Jackson, Andy McKay, Ringo Starr, with McCartney cooing platitudinous sentiments on a set of lyrics seemingly made up on the spur of the moment."

PENNY REEL, NME, NOVEMBER 5, 1983

Know-It-All", it's as upbeat and addictive as "Say Say Say". The harmonies are joyous, the production crisp, the beat insistent, the groove in place. It's a proper showstopper; more Quincy Jones than George Martin, and it would have sounded great sandwiched between "Billie Jean" and "Human Nature". Album closer "Through Our Love" is another hymn to Linda, strident and unashamedly emotional, which simply powers through the chord changes. It's this album's wannabe standard, and it would have made a perfect melody for Luther Vandross or Teddy Pendergrass.

Elsewhere, McCartney returns to his small-scale sonic experiments, and they're pretty fine too. Schmoozy instrumental "Hey Hey", a co-write with Stanley Clarke, pops and snaps with pleasure. "Tug Of Peace" – with its tribal beat, angular chord progressions and counterpoint vocals – recalls Talking Heads (as did "Coming Up"). The album's most obvious cross-reference to its predecessor, it's another one of those reminders – every solo album has one – that McCartney has a from-the-gods gift for melodical oddness; and a true composer's desire to experiment and grow.

But there are missteps. "The Other Me" had potential, once: a cute ear-worm melody, some neat chord changes, and an engaging, intimate vocal. But lyrically, it is painful: *"I know I was a crazy fool/For treating you the way I did/But something took hold of me/And I acted like a dustbin lid."* See also "The Average Person", unchallenged as worst song on the album until "We All Stand Together" turned up as a bonus track on the CD reissue in 1993. It's a fatuous Macca message song, all end-of-the-pier storytelling, underlined by a melody that invades personal space, repeatedly.

"Keep Under Cover" is better, but similarly flawed. A higher-tempo, rockier effort, its memorable touches (the "Band On The Run" structure, a fadeout a bit like "Helter Skelter") are trampled under the weight of matey melodies and lyrics like, *"What good is butter if you haven't got bread?/What good is art when it hurts your head?/Might as well be in bed."*

You can understand why contemporary critical judgements were not kind. "An over-reliance on charm has always been his weakness," suggested Robert Christgau, dismissing the album's apparent fluffiness. Parke Puterbaugh in *Rolling Stone* went in harder: "Confusing slightness and simplicity, *Pipes Of Peace* is, by and large, mediocre McCartney." But none of the '60s icons were really pulling up trees in 1982 and '83... The Rolling Stones' *Undercover*? The Who's *It's Hard*?

TRACKMARKS PIPES OF PEACE

1 Pipes Of Peace ★★★
2 Say Say Say ★★★★
3 The Other Me ★★
4 Keep Under Cover ★★
5 So Bad ★★★★
6 The Man ★★★★
7 Sweetest Little Show ★★★
8 Average Person ★
9 Hey Hey ★★★
10 Tug Of Peace ★★★★
11 Through Our Love ★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: George Martin
Recorded at: AIR Studios, Montserrat Island, West Indies; Paul McCartney's home studio
Personnel: Paul McCartney (bass guitar, guitars, piano, keyboards, synthesiser, drums, vocals), Linda McCartney (keyboards, backing vocals), Michael Jackson (vocals on "Say Say Say" and "The Man"), Eric Stewart (guitars, backing vocals), Denny Laine (guitars, keyboards, vocals), Hughie Burn, Geoff Whitehorn (guitar), Stanley Clarke (bass guitar, vocals), Andy Mackay, Ernie Watts (saxophone), Ringo Starr, Steve Gadd, Dave Mattacks (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 4; US 15

RELEASE DATE
OCTOBER 22
1984

PAUL McCARTNEY

GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET

Yesterday, all his troubles seemed so far away. McCartney's big-screen midlife crisis.

BY STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

AS THE '60s grow distant, our love for The Beatles grows ever more unconditional. Look at the way even *Magical Mystery Tour*, scorned as a pretentious farrago in 1967, was lovingly rehabilitated and even cherished on its Blu-ray reissue in 2012.

But it's still hard to conceive of a time when anyone might look fondly upon *Give My Regards To Broad Street*, Paul McCartney's 1984 feature film. Disowned almost immediately by everyone involved, it was a disaster even by the meagre standards of the British pop movie. And yet it's a peculiarly underwhelming rock folly: born not of imperial hubris or decadent caprice but rather the banal grumbling and idle daydreams of a bored, isolated, intermittently inspired pop genius.

It's not hard to see why a movie might have made sense in 1984. *Tug Of War* and *Pipes Of Peace* had re-established him as a bankable mainstream figure – in 1983 he was established as the richest entertainer in the UK. And yet, four years after Lennon's murder, touring was still not on the cards. A feature offered the opportunity to capitalise on his renewed success, exploit the back catalogue and lay to rest the spectre of Dirk McQuickly.

He had been considering the possibility since at least 1974, when he toyed with a half-baked tale of intergalactic pop doppelgangers and naturally enough asked Isaac Asimov to knock up a script. Later in the '70s he commissioned both Willy Russell and Tom Stoppard to conjure something from the slim storyline of *Band On The Run*.

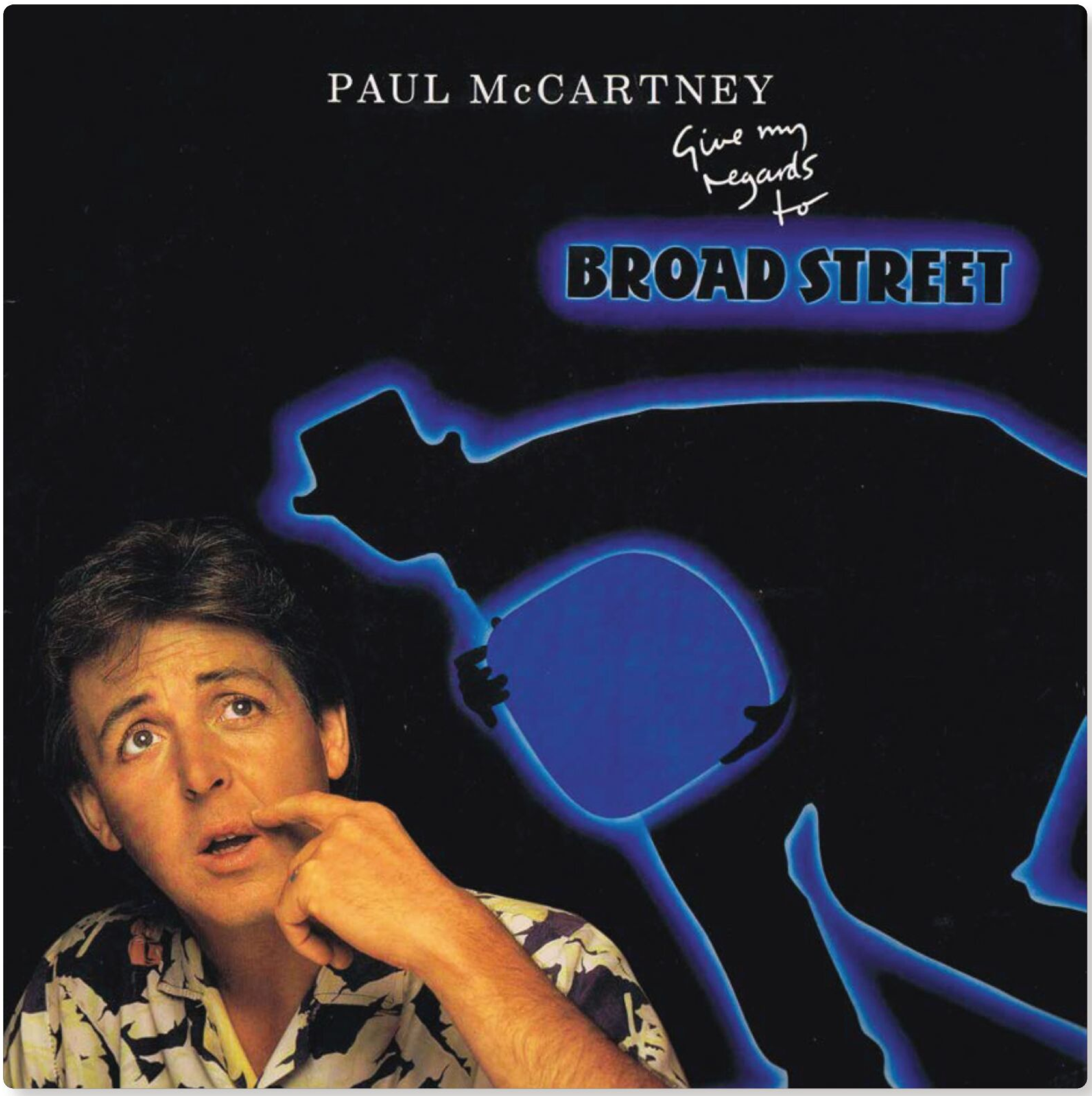
Ultimately, having apparently learned nothing from *Magical Mystery Tour*, he decided to have a go himself, sketching a kind of midlife, fame-exhausted sequel to *A Hard Day's Night*, detailing the humdrum showbiz machinery behind the popular song. But, as the resulting film amply demonstrates, it's hard to think of artistic sensibilities more obviously opposed than that of film auteur – smuggling an artistic vision through the immense, exhausting bureaucracies of production and direction – and a pop composer of such facility that he could literally write a song like "Yesterday" in his sleep.

It's the indomitable strength of the songwriting (and, admittedly, the forgettable tedium of the film) that makes it possible to listen to the album of *Give My Regards To Broad Street* and imagine another, more successful, McCartney movie: a record of the live show, something along the lines of Jonathan Demme's record of a Talking Heads show, *Stop Making Sense*, also released in 1984. The album quite naturally follows the structure of a five-act live show. The first, a set of Beatles songs, sensitively revisited, with George Martin's Sally Army brass setting a mournful keynote for the album. *Broad Street* often feels like one long act of mourning for The Beatles – from the opening shots of McCartney, alone in the back of his roller, stuck in the drizzle of mid-'80s London traffic, taunted by the radio playing "Good Day Sunshine", through the chores of TV recordings and radio appearances, without the kind of gang that might spark some fun from proceedings, or even the ravenous, pursuing fans that might create a sense of urgency. In this context, "Yesterday" feels like a song that had been patiently biding its time for 20 years and its right moment – so much more appropriate for midlife Macca than the sad-eyed youth who composed it.

The segue from "Here, There And Everywhere" to *Tug Of War*'s "Wanderlust" makes plain a subtext of the project, to elide the mess of Wings from the McCartney story. When he sings *"Oh, where did I go wrong my love?"*, it feels like he's apologising to his audience for the long, winding road from *Ram* to *Back To The Egg*, a promise that he's returned to the mainstream of the marketplace.

It's notable that "Silly Love Songs" is the only Wings song to make the set, part of an ill-conceived second act of solo songs, and that it marks the nadir of a poor movie. For some reason, McCartney chooses to perform it with his band got up like an albino Flock Of Seagulls tribute act, accompanied by truly bad body-popping and moonwalking.

Things get back on track with a third act which briefly imagines a road not taken, a pub rock McCartney, the kind of mid-'80s, post-Squeeze solo artist who might have found a home alongside co-star Tracey Ullman on Stiff Records. Performing



CRITICS' VERDICT

"The implication seems to be that, bereft of inspiration, McCartney is relying on the transference of fans' affection for Lennon by going into The Beatles canon. Aesthetically it's a pointless exercise. …*Broad Street* is McCartney gazing at the reflection of the perspex mask of his past, his soul. I find it wanting, severely debilitated. It could be the harbinger of his real decline."

GAVIN MARTIN, NME, NOVEMBER 3, 1984

in a sequence shot in a Bermondsey warehouse, in a band alongside Ringo, Dave Edmunds and Chris Spedding, it's the closest McCartney gets to cracking a smile in the whole movie.

This set also features the only two previously unrecorded songs, "Not Such A Bad Boy" and "No Values". The latter is a neglected gem of the solo discography – apparently his attempt at writing a Rolling Stones song, it's an unusually convincing McCartney rocker, carried along with a sourness and sneer worthy of Costello and a crackling, livewire band. The group, now incorporating Eric Stewart, is even strong enough to burn off some of the saccharine and schmaltz of *Pipes Of Peace*'s "So Bad" to reveal a McCartney classic.

Notwithstanding an incomprehensible cameo from Giant Haystacks, this section might have been strong enough to carry the whole film. There's a camaraderie, a relaxed joy in playing in a live band, that's so absent from the rest of the film – particularly the following session shot in a radio studio, featuring stilted, string-swathed reprises of "For No One" and "Eleanor Rigby". In a way, the busy loneliness dissected in the latter turned out to be a kind of premonition of the emptiness of '80s celebrity as depicted in *Broad Street*. Despite being surrounded by scurrying management and minions, McCartney largely drifts through the film on a disinterested sigh, even as the plot conjures the possibility of the collapse of his business empire, the loss of his fortune and his reduction (in a strange dream within a dream within a dream sequence that McCartney seems to relish) to busking outside Leicester Square tube station.

And it's the loneliness that, in a magnificently melodramatic, Liverpudlian last gasp shot worthy of Steven Gerrard, he strikes back at with "No More Lonely Nights", which almost redeems and justifies the whole sorry mess of the movie. You can imagine him composing it as a genre exercise, just as he once wrote "Live And Let Die": an attempt to write the ballad that followed "Arthur's Theme" and "Up Where We Belong" to win Oscar for best song. (The fact that it wasn't even nominated for the prize ultimately won by "I Just Called To Say I Love You" must have been particularly galling.)

If earlier the film had imagined a garage band McCartney, with "No More Lonely Nights" you imagine a kind of poised mid-'80s sophisto-pop alternative, McCartney as a Kitchenware peer of, say, Paddy McAloon (it's not just Linda's vaporous backing vocals that suggest Prefab Sprout). Tellingly, the track, complete with scintillating Dave Gilmour solo, was laid down in just three hours at Elstree – the kind of spontaneous genius McCartney excelled at, the very opposite of the disciplined labour of filmmaking.

It almost redeemed the film – but not quite. The director, Peter Webb, barely worked again. Ralph Richardson, who has a brief cameo, died shortly after filming. Broad Street station itself closed within a couple of years. And, to date, outside of the Frog Chorus, Paul McCartney has never returned to the Top 5 of the singles chart.

TRACKMARKS GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET

1 No More Lonely Nights ★★★★★
2 Good Day Sunshine ★★
3 Corridor Music ★
4 Yesterday ★★★★
5 Here, There And Everywhere ★★★
6 Wanderlust ★★★★
7 Ballroom Dancing ★★
8 Silly Love Songs ★★
9 Not Such A Bad Boy ★★★
10 No Values ★★★★
11 For No One ★★
12 Eleanor Rigby ★★
13 Eleanor's Dream ★★
14 The Long And Winding Road ★
15 No More Lonely Nights (Playout Version) ★★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: George Martin
Recorded at: Elstree Film Studios, AIR, Abbey Road, CTS studios, London
Personnel includes: Paul McCartney (vocals, gtr, bass gtr, piano, keys, elec harpsichord, drums), Linda McCartney (vocals, piano, keys), Eric Stewart (vocals), David Gilmour, Dave Edmunds, Chris Spedding, Steve Lukather, Eric Ford (gtr), Herbie Flowers, Louis Johnson, Russ Stableforth (bass), George Martin (piano), Ringo Starr, Dave Mattacks (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 21

RELEASE DATE
SEPTEMBER 1
1986

PRESS TO PLAY

A misguided play for '80s relevance – or one of Macca's oddest and most undervalued albums? Stop the Press!

BY NICK HASTED

WHEN McCARTNEY WAS asked for his musical regrets, he had just one to mention. “The lyrics to ‘Press’ were pretty de-pressin’, pretty corny,” he told one interviewer. “An album like *Press To Play*,” he mused to another, volunteering a subject which plainly bothered him. “That got a good kicking when it came out in ’86. And rightly so.”

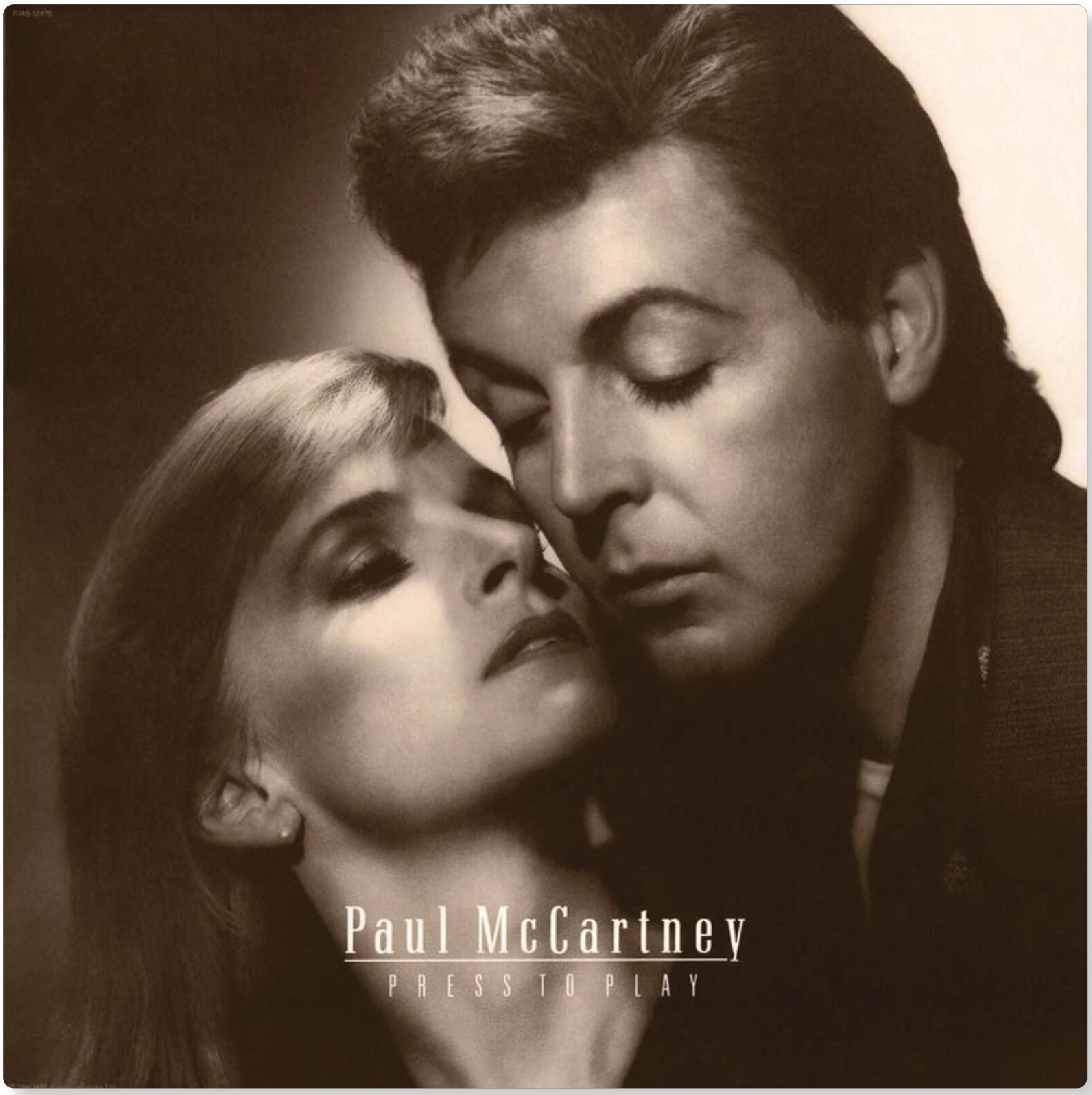
It was his worst-selling album of the ’80s, hot on the heels of the *Give My Regards To Broad Street* fiasco. For the competitive McCartney, who gained validation from hits (“If you’re working towards an audience, you don’t like to feel they’ve all left the theatre,” he once said), this automatically made it an album to bury. His main collaborators agreed. “I don’t think it was that great,” producer Hugh Padgham reflected. “I don’t think he was in an era of writing good songs.” Co-writer Eric Stewart was only slightly kinder, judging it, “A good album that got lost in translation.”

There was some truth to all of this. But *Press To Play* also stands with *McCartney II* as McCartney’s most experimental ’80s album, flinging ideas around with giddy zeal. It was after a long night mixing one of its singles that he gave the first of many interviews insisting that it was he, not Lennon, who introduced The Beatles to the avant-garde. Some moments here, sounding like digital updates of some lost, late-night, stoned cut-up session with Brion Gysin at Barry Miles’ pad, seem designed to prove his point.

The impetus for change came from George Martin, after three hit albums in his trusted hands. “He didn’t really want to produce another album with Paul,” Eric Stewart remembered. “He thought he should go back to a group situation.” First, McCartney tried out Stewart, a favoured post-Wings studio help who he admired for his writing with 10cc, as the first of several new Lennons. “I didn’t fancy working on my own,” McCartney admitted, and the new team co-wrote face-to-face, Beatles-style. “The main aims when we started,” Stewart told the BBC, “were to produce something a lot hotter than... *Pipes Of Peace* and *Tug Of War*.” The “adrenaline feel” of early Beatles records, “made in a couple of days”, was the ideal. At the same time, McCartney wanted an aggressively contemporary raid on the charts, built for the new CD format: “It should leap out of the speakers.” So he sent the demos to the creator of the ’80s’ inescapable gated-drum sound, Hugh Padgham. The cassette reached him, appropriately, at a Phil Collins session. His excitement faded once he pressed play. “I was underwhelmed when I heard those songs... effectively them sitting around a campfire with a couple of acoustic guitars,” he told classicbands.com’s Gary James. “But what are you going to do, as a 28-year-old who’s just been asked to produce an album with one of the greatest guys in pop music ever?” Padgham not only didn’t believe in the music he was producing, but found his co-producer, McCartney, in full creative control. Stewart, initially a third producer, recalled being summarily “paid off”. “I fell out with Eric Stewart doing it,” Padgham admitted of sessions where he found McCartney, too, “quite annoying... after a year of every day in the studio, he’s not quite on the same pedestal as when you started.”

> INSUBSTANTIAL BUT BREEZILY INFECTIOUS IS *PRESS TO PLAY'S* DEFAULT SETTING

The first single, “Press”, was busy and bright, but scraped into the UK chart at 25, continuing the slide of the previous year’s film soundtrack single “Spies Like Us” (No 13), after a run of four Top 3



CRITICS' VERDICT

"The boldest swinger in town mucks around with some technology in his garden shed, using it to tickle and tease some of his best tunes for a good while. When it works, on the carborundum-sharpened 'Press' and 'Footprints', the rest of the world is at the bottom of his ladder."

JOHN McCREADY, NME, SEPTEMBER 20, 1986

"Paul's been investing in a new studio with lots of hi-tech equipment and clearly he's been spending his time playing with all that lately. Consequently this album is full of noises and clever bits... which, it has to be said, are rather more entertaining than the songs."

COLIN IRWIN, MELODY MAKER, SEPT 6, 1986

hits. The melody is thin but the ideas are nimble: a patented wrongfooting yet right McCartney middle-eight; a Carlos Alomar guitar solo; fluttering, percussive synths. McCartney's strong, youthful voice stands clear of the clattering Linn drums in the mix, a warmly human element. The second single, "Pretty Little Head", warned of the album's choppier reaches. Tumbling African drums, which wouldn't have been out of place on Peter Gabriel's *So* the same year, support McCartney's deep-voiced tribal chant, suiting portentous lyrics about tribesmen "*living a life of silent dignity*". Long, dour, instrumental synth passages follow. A friend had no idea it was McCartney when it came on in a shop at the time – this commercially suicidal oddity's triumph and failure.

"Talk More Talk" goes still further out, starting with slowed tapes of the stoned-sounding McCartneys and pals reciting random fragments of what may be Paul's bad reviews ("sleazy instruments, half-taught, half-baked ideas...") and descriptions of the song's recording ("digital organ, finishing stretch"). Few other major '80s acts would have been able to release something so amateurishly weird or, to McCartney's credit, wanted to.

As he applied his skittish '60s brain to the tools of '80s production, *Press To Play*'s original, raw brief wasn't wholly abandoned. Its McCartney/Stewart opener, "Stranglehold", combines rockabilly bass and Linn drums, with an artificial sense of space which McCartney's stereo diagrams in the album's inner sleeve show he built carefully. The insubstantial but breezily infectious result is *Press To Play*'s default setting.

The album ends with a run of McCartney/Stewart songs whose unforced charm suggests the partnership could have continued. "Move Over Busker" bears all the hallmarks of McCartney's spontaneous lyric-writing style, with a new, witty foil to help finish them. Nell Gwynne and Errol Flynn are among its absurd verses' cast, as McCartney dusts off his Little Richard howl for music steeped in doo-wop and Ben E King.

"Angry" is straight, rattling '60s British R'n'B, with Pete Townshend and Phil Collins on board, and McCartney apparently auditioning for the Yardbirds. Tony Visconti's orchestration of the Wings-style ballad "Only Love Remains" earlier on the album is topped by Anne Dudley's work on the closing "However Absurd". Its steady orchestral build hints at "Hey Jude" hugeness, but ends with a pastoral fade-out.

Press To Play was lavishly released, only to cost McCartney commercial momentum he'd never really recover. His hubris and musical curiosity define a flyweight, pleasingly odd album. But its failure shocked him out of his songwriting slump. A more acidic new Lennon was needed.

TRACKMARKS PRESS TO PLAY

1 Stranglehold ★★★
2 Good Times Coming/Feel The Sun ★★★
3 Talk More Talk ★★
4 Footprints ★★★
5 Only Love Remains ★★★
6 Press ★★★
7 Pretty Little Head ★★★
8 Move Over Busker ★★★
9 Angry ★★★
10 However Absurd ★★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: Paul McCartney, Hugh Padgham
Recorded at: Hog Hill Mill Studio, East Sussex; Rude Studio, Scotland
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass, acoustic and electric guitar), Eric Stewart (acoustic and electric guitar), Linda McCartney (keyboards, backing vocals, spoken word), Neil Jason (bass), Carlos Alomar (acoustic and electric guitar), Eddie Rayner (keyboards), Simon Chamberlain (piano), Pete Townshend (guitar), Phil Collins, Jerry Marotta, John Bradbury, Graham Ward (drums, percussion), Ray Cooper (percussion), Dick Morrissey (tenor sax), Gary Barnacle (sax), Kate Robbins, Ruby James (harmony vocals), James McCartney, Eddie Klein, John Hammel, Matt Howe, Steve Jackson (spoken word)
Highest chart position: UK 8; US 30

Macca with a birthday present from wife Linda – the upright bass played by Bill Black in Elvis Presley's early trio

“I’m superstitious. I think that if you stop, you might never come back”

1987, and a long-absent Paul McCartney makes a welcome return to the pages of *NME*. **TERRY STAUNTON** and **ROY CARR** meet up with a man torn between being Mr Normal and knowing “I’m not really, never can be”. On the agenda: punk, Elvis Costello, vintage rock’n’roll covers, U2, being an exhibit at the British Museum – and hip-hop!

NME
PAUL McCARTNEY
UNION JACK
KRUSH
HOUSE BOOM

TAKEN FROM NME 12/12/1987

DO YOU FIND that people in your position can get slightly isolated from the way other musicians, or the world at large, operates?

“Slightly? I would say well isolated. And insulated. It can’t be helped, you get off the street, as it were, you’re not hangin’ around the guitar shops in Charing Cross Road any more, you get a bit of fame and you become isolated. You get a lot of fame and it’s easy to lose touch…”

SOME WOULD SAY Paul McCartney lost touch long ago. As one member of a particularly fab four, he gave us at least half a dozen classic songs per album. Some would say these days that we’re lucky to get one gem every couple of years, maybe longer. Some would say he should have buggered off to the farm long ago and left the music to the young bucks with a bit of hunger in them. Some would say he’s laughing at his legacy by bothering to still make records. But what does the man himself say?

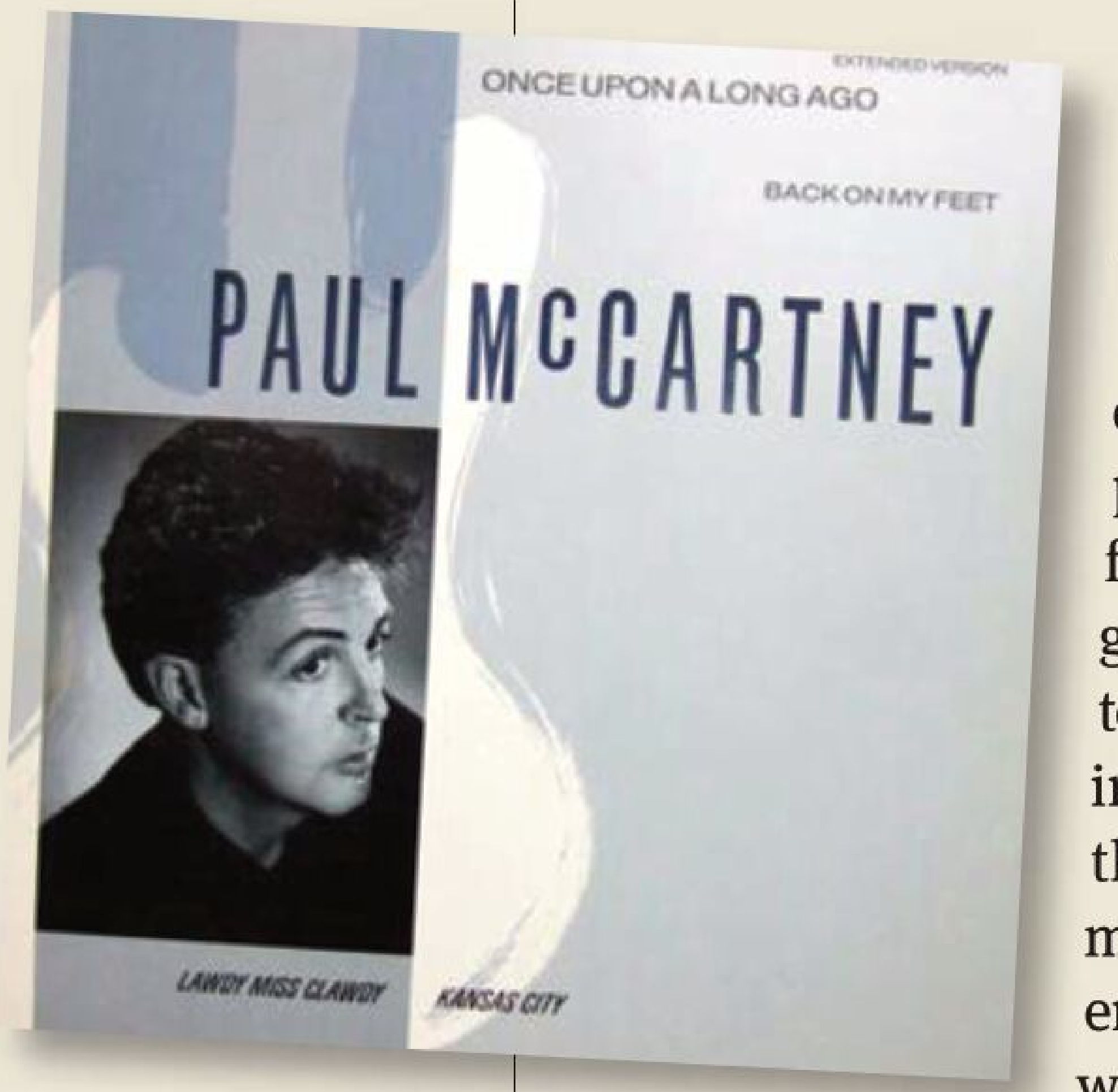
McCartney is well aware of just how impenetrable the bubble of fame and fortune can be, and it appears that he is trying to do something about it. His new single, “Once Upon A Long Ago” is standard McCartney fare – better than some of his songs, not a patch on others. But it’s the flipsides that point towards a man still keen to have a go, a man who still believes he has something to offer, something to say.

“Back On My Feet” is the first offering from his new songwriting partnership with Elvis Costello, more of which should crop up on both men’s 1988 albums. It still bears the strong mark of McCartney, but has a strange lyrical twist, full of the wordplay and alliteration Elvis is so fond of.

Get hold of the two 12-inch versions of the single and you will hear a total of four old rockers, part of a hefty catalogue recorded in just two days last July. With the help of a handful of solid, reliable musicians like Mickey Gallagher, Mick Green and Nick Garvey (no big star productions here, no ego trips), he relived the days of The Cavern and The Star Club, and discovered he could still cut it, still scream like Little Richard, still produce a fresh and exciting record, without the help of members of the LSO, or ELO for that matter.

McCartney had found the escape hatch in his billion-dollar bubble, found his way back to the real world. He also found his way to his Soho Square offices to talk exclusively to the *NME* about his past, his newfound musical friends, the future, and the problems with being Paul McCartney.

He also talked with great enthusiasm about the rock’n’roll records he grew up listening to, how they first inspired him to become a musician, why he wanted to sing them all over again, and why all in one or two takes.



So what was the philosophy behind that decision?

“I just decided we could either sit around and ponder the whole thing for hours like you do, or get on with it. So I just said to the guys, ‘“Kansas City” in G, sort of a shuffle,’ tell them where to stop in the middle, and give ’em an ending – that was it. Then it was ‘…two, three, four’ and straight into it. Just give someone the nod for the solo. They played great. No-one had any time to think, that was the secret. Two takes was the maximum, and that was if the first one was really duff. We did 18 tracks in one day. And another 18 tracks the next!

BLEDDYN BUTCHER

McCartney circa '87: "We sort of knew what we were doin' all along, we weren't that thick"

BLEDDYN BUTCHER

In these days of the techno-trap when machines take over, had you missed recording in the primitive style of the late '50s and early '60s?
"Yeah, but never realised it. You develop your own style, you alter it as machines come in, Linn drums and all, and I'd just gone along with it. When we came to do these jams it was really just to have a play, have a sing, and get the old pipes going and ready for when I record the next LP. I wanted a casual coffee-shop atmosphere, y'know, just bring along your instrument and sit in, but inevitably it became slightly more formalised than that.

"The guys kept sayin', 'Are we gonna do any of your numbers?' and I'd say, 'Yeah, probably,' and we did 'I Saw Her Standing There' which was the nearest we got to it, but I kept finding that the only ones I wanted to play was the old 'prehistoric' rock. That was the only thing that was in me brain.

> "WE'D LIE ON TOP OF EACH OTHER TO KEEP WARM: A BEATLE SANDWICH"

"So we started off with '20 Flight Rock', then into a bit of 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy', 'Kansas City', a bit of Fats Domino, Sam Cooke, etc. We even got as dangerous as to play Elvis' 'It's Now Or Never'. There were a few frowns when I called that one, but some of the lads loved it."

Will that ever see the light of day?
"I don't think so, that one's been burned. That's straight from Hamburg, it used to be the big one every Saturday night. So, we did the 18 in one day and I thought, 'Shit, this is the way The Beatles used to record.' Missed drum beats, out-of-tune guitars, the lot. Often it's the errors that set a piece of music apart. If there was an odd twang here and there, we just left it in to give the track a bit of character. If you start messin' with those little twangs, it spoils it.

"The musicians were grafters, no egos got in the way. We didn't sit around sweatin' and wonderin' if the drum was all right in the third bar."

McCartney to reform Beatles with Julian Lennon.
McCartney to play Rupert Bear in new Spielberg movie.
McCartney to write with Costello.
Two of these statements are false.
"One of the nice things about working with Elvis [*Costello*] is that he'll tell me straight, 'That's gonna come out corny.'

"He doesn't mince his words and I like that. We're a form of discipline for each other."

You're the opposites in many ways, the two of you.
"Yeah, so were me and John. That's one of the things I was sayin' to Elvis, he reminds me a little bit of John. Working with him is very similar. Somebody like Elvis is probably quite influenced by John. We wrote one song and thought, 'God, this is just like The Beatles', he was actually taking John's role. At first we were a bit worried by that, but then thought, 'Well, if it's gonna happen, let it.'

"We demoed some things which I like. Our voices seem to suit each other, they blend together well. And he's a goer, Elvis, I like him, he's not coy. There's none of this sittin' around chewin' pencils, and that's good for me."

How did you get together?
"I was talkin' to people 'round the office about how I missed a good collaborator, because it was always a big help with John, we were able to regulate and edit each other. Like, I'd start to sing, *'It's getting better all the time,'* and John would go, *'Couldn't get much worse.'* If you've got a collaborator like that, you're cookin'."

Is the liaison conceived as an ongoing partnership?
"It could be, but I don't really want to say that. At first we decided not to tell anyone, because everyone would be expectin' something big and if it didn't work out they'd be disappointed. The two of us working together sounds really interesting on paper, but what if we goof? What if we just dry up?

"So far I've helped him with a couple of his songs and he did the same for me. On the B-side of the single I was stuck with the words – well, I wasn't stuck, but they weren't that good, so he fixed them. Then we sat down and said, 'Right, let's write something from scratch,' and we took it from there.

"That was really something different, we reckon, that one. I don't want to go on about it like it's some great partnership, because it might not last... but it's certainly worked so far."

And Johnny Marr?
"I jammed with him on some of the rock'n'roll sessions. See, I invited a lot of different kinds of people down to the studio: Trevor Horn, Mick Green, Chris Whitten from the Julian Cope band. Johnny was good, he's into the same stuff as Linda – Neil Young, you know, wild guitar stuff – but that's as far as we've gone. I also invited Jeff Beck along, but he's off playing waltzes for Malcolm McLaren.

So, you've done your rock'n'roll sessions, and you're working on new material with Costello. Any other business?
"I'd like to do a couple of John's songs, I think that would be interesting. Everyone else has messed around with his stuff except me. I'd like to have a go at 'Beautiful Boy' or 'Imagine', and one of the early ones I really want to get into is 'I'll Get You'. If I don't record it, I'll at least perform it live some day..."

PAUL McCARTNEY IS sitting in the back of a car outside a pizza stand in Times Square. Suddenly, a man bangs on the window. The cautious passenger winds the window down just far enough to hear what the stranger has to say.

"Hey, man, aren't you the guy who plays Paul in *Beatlemania*?"

"Yup, you got me in one."

Do you ever watch films or plays about the early days of The Beatles?
"I don't really watch them. It's weird seein' somebody bein' me. It was even weird hearing our voices in the *Yellow Submarine* cartoon. The actors tend to do this strange half-Brum, half-Scouse drawl like, 'Ullo, 'ow err yow, wack?' You

have a bit of a laugh at it, sometimes it's infuriating, but you try not to let it bother you.

"What I prefer to watch are those early interviews we did. Have you seen some of those? Ringo sayin' 'I want to open a herrdressin' shop.' John reckonin' we could go for a couple of years, two or three maybe. You never thought beyond that. It's weird when you think back to 18, you never thought you'd go on to about 43 and still be doin' the rockers. I tell you, 24 was our mark at one time, 'cause Frank Ifield was 25. We thought, 'You can't get much older than that, man.'"

Have you got a big collection of Beatle memorabilia?

"Nah, we never got any of that, we just saw it come and go, y'know. I haven't even got a whole record collection. I picked up the odd CD this year, though. Some people have got complete files of stuff. I've collected a few things recently like original lyrics and stuff that come up at auctions and sales."

Did you know that the British Museum has a Lennon & McCartney display?

"Yeah, I took me daughter who had some study thing to do. We got down there and we walked past this thing and I thought, 'Bloody hell!' There's James Joyce on one side, Shakespeare on the other, and Lennon & McCartney in the middle! See, I'm lookin' at this stuff, and it's like history!

"Time passes and suddenly you've turned up in your kids' schoolbooks under the heading 'The Sixties'. It's a laugh, I love it. I think it's great on *Mastermind* when a guy goes on with a specialist subject like 'The Who, 1962–'67'. If anyone had ever told me that we would end up bein' categories in quizzes or whatever...

"I must tell you this, I met some young girl in America, about 13 she was, who told me, 'I've been on a summer camp study course about The Beatles, and we learned all about that backward message on the *Sgt Pepper* run-out groove.' I said, 'No, luv, that's not true. We were just muckin' about, it doesn't mean anything. They shouldn't be teaching you that.' But she said, 'No, you're wrong,' and by now I'm screamin' at her, 'But, I was in 'em!' and she's arguin', 'But I did the course!' She wasn't havin' any of it."

George has been able to come back with a big hit after five years away from music. Have you ever contemplated such a lengthy sabbatical?

"Not really, I never fancied that. I'm a bit superstitious – I tend to think that if you stop, you might never come back. The only time I really took a lengthy break from music was after the Apple business. I just sodded off to Scotland to get away from it."

Did you get your fingers burnt, did it scare you a bit?

"Yeah. All the money we'd ever earned was goin' down someone else's... trouser pocket, and I didn't fancy that idea at all. Not one little bit. So, I was the bugger who had to fight, everyone else was gonna give it all up. There was this guy called Allen Klein and he was gonna have it all. But I couldn't actually sue him, which is what I wanted to do, so I had to sue The Beatles themselves. It was a crazy time, one of us suing from within. That's partly why I took time off, to try and stop the rot. I didn't really want to do that, but in the end there was nothing else I could do.

"But it saved the money for them and for me, and once it had all blown over they were quite pleased. That was the biggest trauma in my business life and it got me down as the guy who broke up The Beatles, which wasn't true. I would have stayed with the band; it was John who actually left."

Are you saying, then, that the band could have gone on after the Apple business?

"Well, we sort of knew what we were doin' all along, we weren't that thick. Rock'n'roll, traditionally, is littered with thickheads, still is, but I think we were sussed enough to know when to knock it on the head. We sort of knew more than the average Joe, so we were always able to perceive what was happening. I remember sayin' to Brian [*Epstein*], 'We're not goin' to America until we've got a No 1 over there.' At that time it was deep perception for a 23-year-old. Others like Cliff Richard went on these little wanker tours supporting Frankie Avalon or whoever without a hit record, but we weren't having any of that.

"Close to the end we realised that there was friction and that we were getting to each other. There were all sorts of weirdnesses comin' in that hadn't been there before, like Yoko was, sort of very much there in the studio. She had a bed because she was pregnant. The three of us *bristled* at that one, we thought, 'Whoa! What have we got here, then? OK, we can cope, say no more. You all right, luv?'

"We worked around it, but we could see the group was starting to break up then. It was like a signal. We even went back to Manchester Square (home of EMI Records) and did the *Please Please Me* cover on the stairs again, this time with beards and long hair, a replica of that first Angus McBean shot. It was like, 'Here we are, God knows how many years later,' and it was the signal for the whole thing to end.

"We were lads who'd grown up together and for a long time it was great, like army buddies. But it was like the old song, *'Wedding bells are breaking up that old gang of mine.'* We had our own lives to lead, we had wives, and for so long the girls had been left out of things because us four lads were so close. I think back to the times in the van when we'd lie on top of each other to keep warm – a Beatle sandwich – I mean that was intimate. You don't get much more intimate than lyin' on top of each other. Well, I suppose you do, but we didn't."

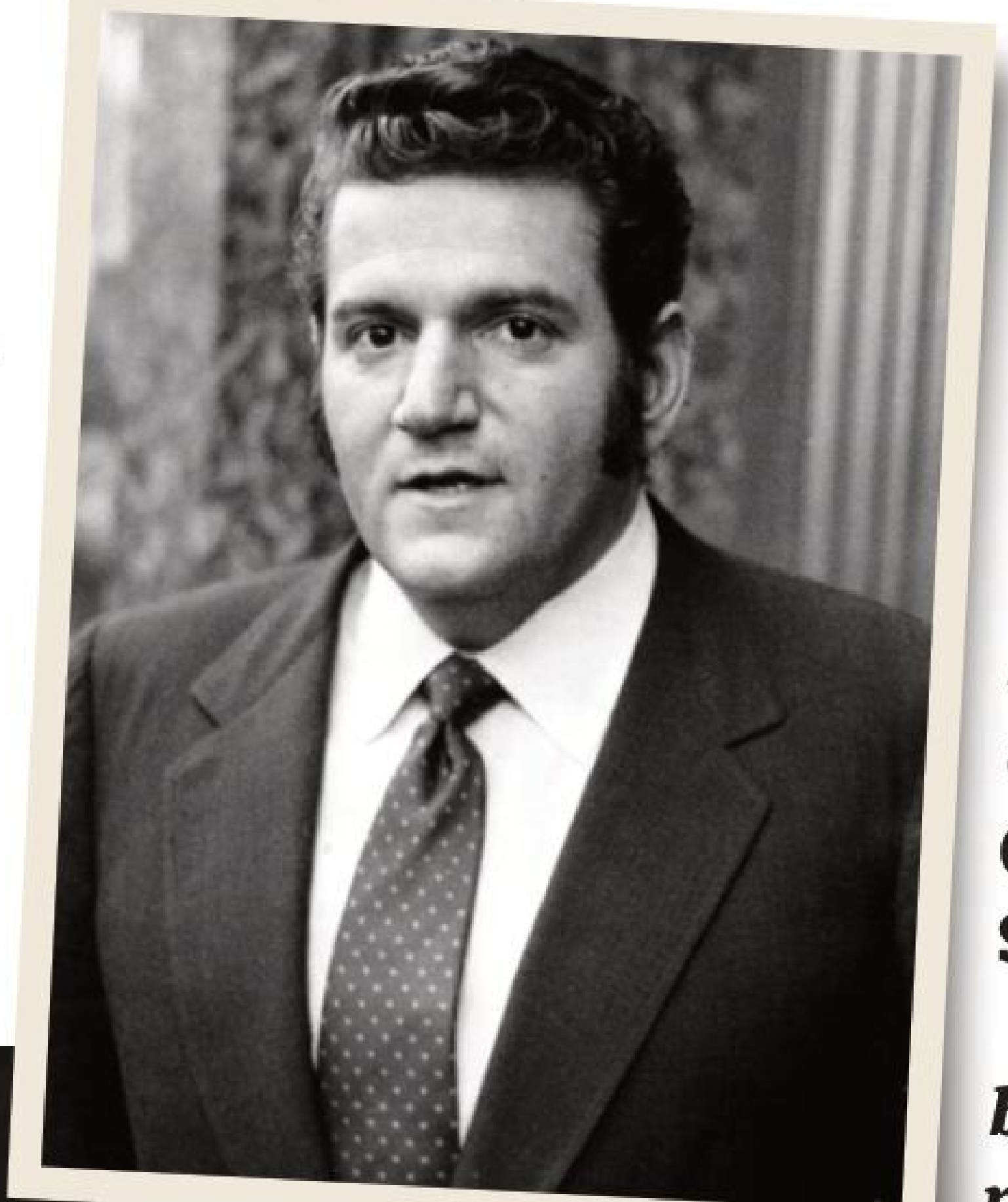
Q. What have* Hello Dolly, Grease, A Chorus Line, La Cage Aux Folles *and* High Society *got in common?

A. They're all money in the bank for Paul McCartney as part of his ever-expanding music publishing empire, which also includes the bulk of Buddy Holly's original material.

Paul, have you ever thought of doing an Andrew Lloyd Webber yourself?

"What, a musical? No, John and I were always asked to do something like that, because we were called Lennon & McCartney, which sort of sounded the same as Rodgers & Hammerstein. There was never any question about it, because one thing John hated with a passion was fucking musicals. He'd walk out, you couldn't get him to sit through *The King And I*. The minute somebody started to sing *'Does she know I'm looking at her?'*, he was off.

"Since then, well, I've been a little bit tempted, because I didn't hate them as much as John, but I must confess I don't like Lloyd Webber's stuff at all! I'm sure he's a very nice lad and all that, but I've never really been grabbed by his music."



Lennon and McCartney at London Airport after a US trip to promote Apple Corps, May 16, 1968; (inset) Allen Klein outside the Law Courts, London, March 1971

STROUD/EXPRESS/GETTY IMAGES, JONES/EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

People tend to have a fixed image of you. For instance, there is 'The Paul McCartney Record'.
"Yeah, there is, a bit."

Is that a tag you'd like to shake off?
"You try to, but you trap yourself at some point. Nobody's perfect, you find yourself in little ruts with your writing. Whenever I write something about love, I never mean it like it comes out. I mean, 'Yeah, my old dad's dead, and I loved him' – that's not soppy, but when it appears in song it inevitably gets blanded out. But the reality of what I'm writing about isn't corny to me. Sometimes it doesn't work out, you make the backing a bit too sweet, or the lyrics a bit too syrupy. Not every song I write is a winner, by any means."

REPRISE RECORDS
FATS DOMINO
Produced by Richard Perry
0763 (L6574)
TAMLA
stevie wonder
we can work it out

Is there anything, looking back over the last few years, that makes you...
"Cringe? Yeah, there's a few. The lyrics to 'Press' were pretty depressin', pretty corny. I don't really like 'Hi Hi Hi', although some people really go for it. To me, it's a bit flared trousers, bootlegs, festivals, very hippy-dippy. I hear it now and cringe and think, 'Did I really do that?' I quite like most of what I do or I wouldn't get to the stage where I record it."

What sort of music do you listen to yourself?
"It's very varied. I like the Def Jam stuff, like Public Enemy, Eric B – I like some of the things that Rakim does – the sound the rappers get is great. I like a lot of reggae, old rock'n'roll, always have done. I like U2, Bono's voice is great. Sharing a mic with him at the end of Live Aid was the high spot of the day for me. I like bands that can play, like Simple Minds, and some of the stuff round the punk time was good. I liked the Pistols a lot. 'Pretty Vacant' was a seriously good record."

Would you ever have a go at something in a Def Jam rap style?
"No, it's too much of a separate entity, I'd get slagged off for even trying. That's why I've shied away from reggae. I don't want to be seen as comin' in on their act. It's like people who became Merseybeaters, like The Jam. There was one of their songs ["*Start*"] that was dangerously close to 'Taxman'. I don't mind that, it's quite flattering, but the rap stuff is a very particular style and I'd rather leave that to the people who know what they're doing."

Macca and Bono at Live Aid, 1985: "Sharing a mic with him was the high spot of the day for me..."

What are your favourite covers of McCartney or Beatle songs?
"Esther Phillips did 'And I Love Him', and I think it was Roy Redman who did 'Good Day Sunshine'. Least favourite would be Anthony Newley doing 'Within You Without You' in a kaftan on a TV special. Wilson Pickett did 'Hey Jude', that was great, so was Stevie Wonder's 'We Can Work It Out'. The ultimate accolade was to have the black acts do your stuff back at you. Fats [*Domino*] did 'Lady Madonna', which was OK, but I'm a bit of a purist when it comes to Fats. That's the dilemma. Of course you want him to do your songs, it's a great honour, you know, The Fat Man doin' your stuff, but I'd rather have 'Blue Monday', please."

"WITH JOHN, WE WERE ABLE TO REGULATE AND EDIT EACH OTHER"

Certain West Coast harmony bands are known to cruise Sunset Strip in customised continental cars, record company inducements to meet release deadlines. Do you find that, no matter who you are, you still have to deliver product to the label?
"Yeah, you do, that's the game. Funny, the first time I heard anyone refer to it as product, I like shuddered. I thought, 'Product? Where am I, Madison Avenue?'"

When did you realise you were producing a product, rather than making music?
"It was early on, pre-Apple. It's a commodity to the businessmen. Fair enough, that's what they deal with. Bands are forced, or 'persuaded', to deliver albums before, say, Christmas, so that the annual turnover for the record company looks healthy. They say things like, 'Paul, our first quarter is depending on you.' I don't like that. I really don't like the business side of things at all, I don't like 'business' full stop. But you can't just stop making records, not if you've signed a big deal. When Dick James had The Beatles' stuff on Northern Songs, there was a year when John and I didn't write as much, and he freaked. All the shareholders were runnin' around screamin', 'There's no output! No product! They're finished!' They were jumpin' off that ship in droves. 'Get out quick! Sell! Sell!' We were doin' *Sgt Pepper* or something', takin' our time and recharging.

How do you stay sane with all that happening?
"You sort of don't believe it. You cut off a part of your brain. It's like a split personality, there's him and there's me. The musician does all the singin' and playin', the other one deals with the fame and talks to the businessmen."

So, you develop schizophrenia to stop yourself going mad.
"Yeah, it's a bit like that. I've always tried to stay normal, and I hate people saying, 'Oh, look, Paul's tryin' to be Mr Humble, Mr Ordinary,' 'cause I know I'm not really, never can be. It's just the odd little thing. I remember George, a big car man, couldn't understand me wantin' to get on a bus when we got money for the first time and we bought flash motors. Mind you, his dad was a bus driver, so he saw it like a step down. But you know, top deck of a bus, it's a bit empty, got a few stops. I like that. I still do it."

A lot of people in Fleet Street and the music press aren't happy with the safe image of you. They want to see you in tight leather trousers, falling out of Stringfellows with Andrew Ridgley at four o'clock in the morning. Then they could have a go at you and say, 'Why doesn't this man grow up?'
"Well, if I was gonna go out and get drunk, I certainly wouldn't go to Stringfellows! It's Poseurs Anonymous."

At this point, an aide delivers three ice-cool tubes of the amber nectar.

"I mean, I go to one or two places to see a bit of live music, that's where you might find me. That's the way I relax. There are those who like the club scene, and then there are those who go out and get quietly pissed..."

GEORGES DE KEERLE/GETTY IMAGES

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PAUL McCARTNEY

CHOBA B CCCP

"You don't know how lucky you are, boys..." A revitalising set of rock'n'roll covers, on sale only back in the USSR!

BY ANDREW MUELLER

THE TITLE TRANSLATES, as the least astute Russian scholar will have deduced, as "Back In The USSR". This rambunctious collection of rock'n'roll standards was not the first of McCartney's works to have been issued by Soviet state record label Melodiya, which had a peculiar passive-aggressive relationship with The Beatles. Officially, Soviet orthodoxy regarded them as "the depth of musical decline". Nevertheless, perhaps in acknowledgement of the widespread bootlegging of Beatles albums behind the Iron Curtain, Melodiya occasionally deigned to issue some Beatles tracks as singles or on compilations, often with the credits obscured.

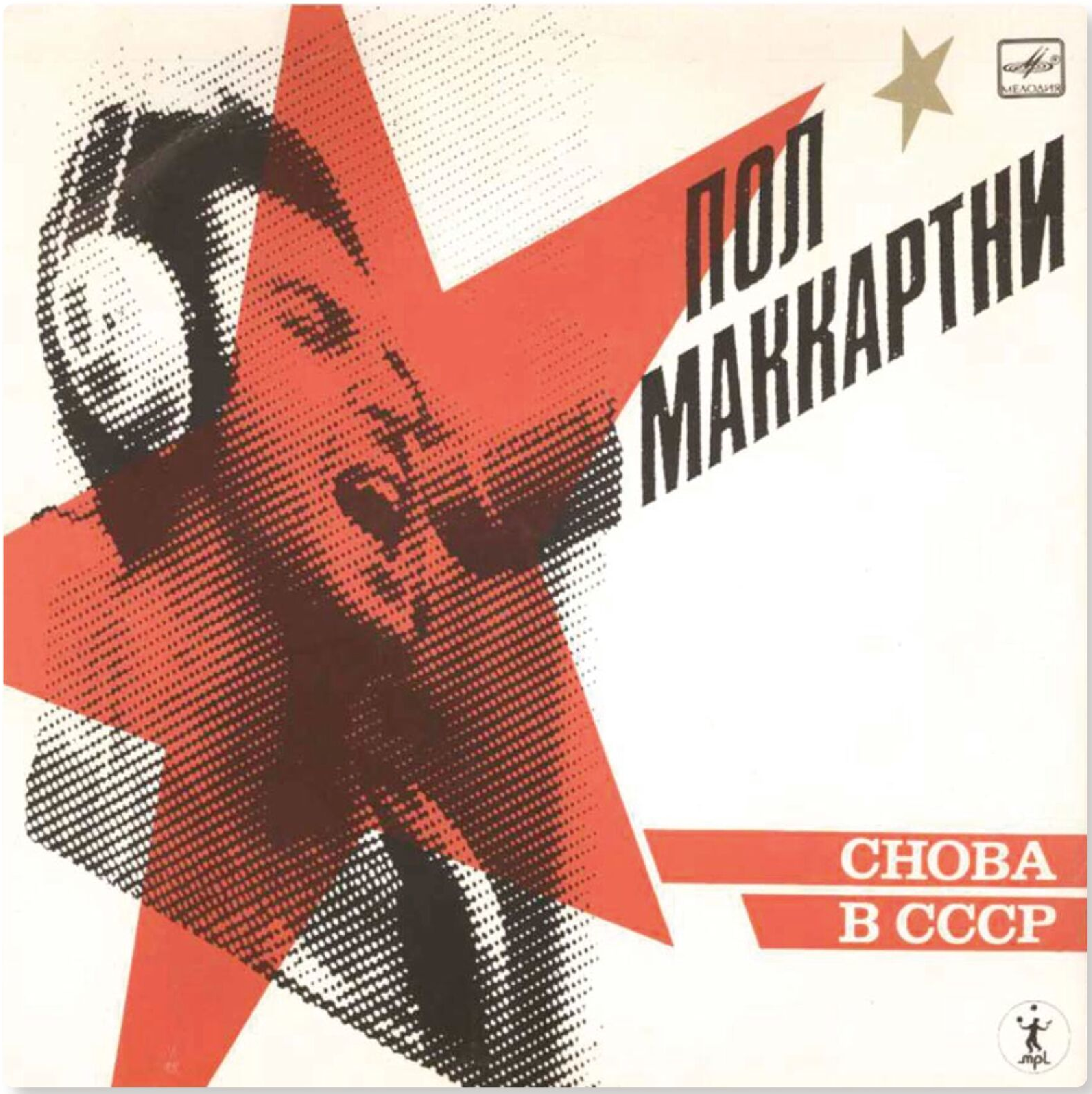
Choba B CCCP does, however, enjoy quiet pub quiz immortality as the first album by a western artist to have been released exclusively for the Soviet market – it was not properly available elsewhere until after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, a demise prompted as much as anything by the weariness of its own citizens, and that of Moscow's other captive nations, with being deprived of access to global popular culture. The American satirist PJ O'Rourke was not wrong when he stood amid the rubble of the Berlin Wall and commented that "72 years of communist indoctrination and propaganda was drowned out by a three-ounce Sony Walkman. A huge totalitarian system has been brought to its knees because nobody wants to wear Bulgarian shoes."

But *Choba B CCCP* was not originally intended as some kind of cultural aid-drop. It began life as a cobweb-blowing exercise, McCartney seeking to summon back the muse which had largely left him to his own devices during *Press To Play*. On Friday nights in the spring of 1987, he gathered bunches of musicians – including Johnny Marr, Trevor Horn, Elvis Costello and Terry Williams, among others – in a London studio to blast through elderly rock'n'roll standards. Enthused, McCartney summoned a band of session statesmen to his Hog Hill Mill Studio in East Sussex. As McCartney later recalled, the musical direction consisted of "I'll nod my head, you do a solo". They recorded at least 20 tracks – reports of the precise number vary – in two days, no overdubs, no post-production tweaking.

> THROUGHOUT *CHOBA*, McCARTNEY SOUNDS GIDDILY, INFECTIOUSLY HAPPY

McCartney's desire that this collection of tear-ups should be his next solo album was overruled by his then-manager, Richard Ogden, on two counts. First, that McCartney needed to atone for *Press To Play* with solid new work sooner rather than later. Second, that every review would amount to a comparison, probably unflattering, with the late and semi-sainted John Lennon's not dissimilar 1975 covers album *Rock'n'Roll*, with which McCartney's roots-retrieval would even share portions of its tracklisting ("Just Because", "Bring It On Home To Me"). Whether it was McCartney or Ogden's idea to approach Melodiya is enshrouded by the mists of time. McCartney later said it was "because Gorbachev and Reagan and Margaret had all been talking Glasnost, you know, and it seemed like a good opportunity to extend a hand of friendship."

Melodiya were licensed to print 400,000 copies, as long as they didn't export any. The free market, as if seeking to prove a point, saw to it that illicitly sourced copies subsequently surfaced in British record shops at asking prices of £500. This, in truth, would have been a poor bargain. But for the four roubles Soviet citizens were charged, *Choba B*



CCCP was excellent value. Rock'n'roll was not by any means unheard of in the USSR – some was grudgingly permitted, much was illegally, inventively and courageously performed and distributed – but it had not been allowed to have anything like the transformative effect it had had upon the west. For its intended audience, *Choba B CCCP* served as catch-up crib-notes for the 20th Century's most influential art form.

There was no doubting McCartney's credentials as a guide. The songs were the material The Beatles had cut their teeth on, schlepping around the dance halls and labour clubs of northern England, then playing amphetamine-amped marathon engagements in disreputable Hamburg bierkellers, before The Beatles became The Beatles, before The Beatles, more than anyone else, made rock'n'roll sound so much more complicated than this. Throughout *Choba B CCCP*, McCartney sounds giddily, infectiously happy to be back there: free for a weekend to be Paul McCartney, teenage rock singer; free for a weekend from being Paul McCartney, 45-year-old elder eminence. On "Just Because", he even treats himself to an unabashed Elvis impression, top lip almost audibly curled.

It's all preposterously great fun. McCartney and his ensemble launch themselves at the likes of Little Richard's "Lucille" and Eddie Cochran's "Twenty Flight Rock" with guileless joy, never allowing the considerable instrumental virtuosity available to them to lumber proceedings with decorum. McCartney whoops, stomps and hollers the Leiber/Stoller blues standard "Kansas City" and Lloyd Price's "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" like a kid who got his first electric guitar for Christmas and is for the first time hearing what a glorious noise he can make with it. He's surprisingly poised on the (infrequent) statelier stuff, as well. Anyone who'd lapsed into thinking of McCartney's emotional palette as comprised substantially of sentimental schlock – and they'd have had their reasons – would have been surprised by how well he shapes as a blues singer on a lovely take on Sam Cooke's "Bring It On Home To Me".

In his liner notes for *Choba B CCCP*, the *NME*'s Roy Carr observed: "The motivation for anyone purchasing an instrument on impulse is usually the determination to re-run those songs learned from records worn-out by repeated playing. To decipher and master precisely what magic spark it takes to communicate in such a devastating manner. The possibility of fame and fortune don't really come into it." For McCartney, who had no need of further fame or fortune at this point, the rekindling of that "magic spark" had become an urgent priority, and one he and his cohorts set about with gusto here. It is surely no coincidence that McCartney followed *Choba B CCCP* with his best LP of original work in years. And if it hastened the hauling down of the hammer and sickle by even a few minutes, so much the better.

TRACKMARKS CHOBA B CCCP

1 Kansas City ★★★★
2 Twenty Flight Rock ★★★★
3 Lawdy Miss Clawdy ★★★★
4 Bring It On Home To Me ★★★★
5 Lucille ★★★★
6 Don't Get Around Much Anymore ★★★
7 I'm Gonna Be A Wheel Someday ★★★
8 That's All Right Mama ★★★
9 Summertime ★★★
10 Ain't That A Shame ★★★★
11 Crackin' Up ★★★
12 Just Because ★★★★
13 Midnight Special ★★★

Label: Melodiya
Produced by: Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Hog Hill Mill Studios, East Sussex
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, guitar, bass), Mick Green (guitar), Nick Garvey (bass), Mick Gallagher (keyboards), Henry Spinetti, Chris Whitten (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 63; US 109 (1991 Parlophone reissue)

RELEASE DATE
JUNE 5
1989

PAUL McCARTNEY

FLOWERS IN THE DIRT

The old Rickenbacker and Hofner bass come out of mothballs, thanks to a spiky new songwriting foil.

BY GRAEME THOMSON

IF *CHOBA B CCCP* plugged McCartney back into the raucous, re-energising spirit of early-'60s Hamburg, his first album of new material in three years proved Beatlesesque in a more knowing, sophisticated and arguably more calculated way.

After the poorly performing *Press To Play*, McCartney knew his next album had to deliver. The awareness that his first tour in a decade had been scheduled on the back of its release presumably also focused his mind on the task in hand. These songs not only had to re-establish McCartney as a viable recording artist, they had to be robust enough to withstand a year on the road.

To that end, in 1987 McCartney approached Elvis Costello with an offer to collaborate. The pair duly embarked on several songwriting sessions, workshopping with two guitars, a piano and a tape-recorder. The former Beatle helped Costello finish up "Veronica" and "Pads, Paws And Claws", both of which were eventually recorded for the *Spike* album, while four further co-writes ended up on *Flowers In The Dirt*.

When the news broke of their collaboration there was much talk along the lines that the acerbic Costello had been drafted in as a de facto Lennon substitute, there primarily to add some snarling invective to McCartney's sugar-sweet concoctions. It was a reductive notion which overlooked the versatility of both men, though they gamely played up to it on "You Want Her Too", an amusing angel-and-devil duet on which they bash heads competing over the same woman. Each time McCartney pleads ingratiating, wide-eyed innocence (*"My intentions are quite sincere"*), he's shot down by Costello, at his most comically splenetic, dispensing embittered barbs.

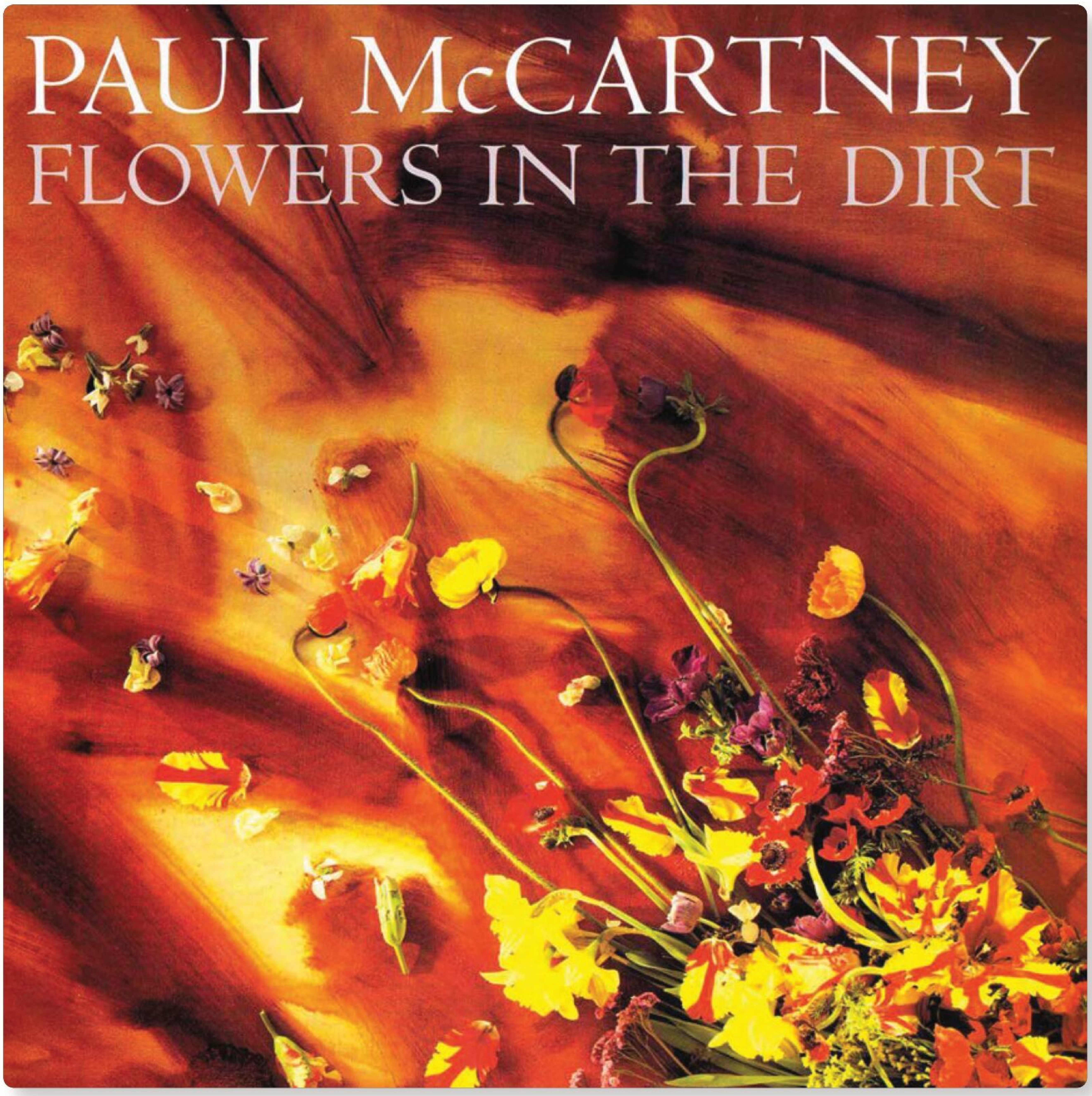
But Costello's influence ran far deeper than providing bile on tap. A Fab fanatic and keen musical historian, he encouraged McCartney to embrace his own past, advice that extended to asking him to bring his Rickenbacker and Hofner bass guitars out of mothballs.

It was a symbolic move which impacted on both the sound and sensibility of the record. These bedrock tools of The Beatles' glory days bring a light, familiar bounce to the almost obscenely breezy Costello co-write "My Brave Face", the album's harmony-laden lead single which broke into the Top 30 hit on both sides of the Atlantic. "This One" reaffirms McCartney's effortless way around an instantly sticky pop melody, while "We Got Married" starts with a minor- key acoustic rattle reminiscent of "Things We Said Today", before David Gilmour's intervention on guitar ambushes proceedings, ushering in a very Pink Floyd-ish coda which proves diverting while not necessarily being to the song's benefit. Lyrically, it's a matter-of-fact take on the nuts and bolts of maintaining a long-term relationship. *"Further on in the game/Waiting up 'til the children came/Place your bets, no regrets."*

The sense of making peace with the past also hangs over "Put It There", a jaunty finger-picked acoustic fragment with a string arrangement by George Martin, inspired by an expression McCartney's late father would use. "He used to hold his hand out and say, 'Put it there if it weighs a ton.' My dad died a long time ago now, but you remember those things with affection."

COSTELLO'S INFLUENCE RAN FAR DEEPER THAN PROVIDING BILE ON TAP

There are almost as many producers on



CRITICS' VERDICT

“‘This isn't a masterpiece, it isn't even a return to form, because his form had never deserted him, he'd just gotten lazy. What *Flowers In The Dirt* shows is that Macca doesn't need guest artists or attempts at kickass rock'n'roll. When it comes to writing ballads, he's still one of the best in the game.”

BOB STANLEY, MELODY MAKER, JUNE 17, 1989

“He must know he will never achieve the heights of 'Paperback Writer' again, but there's more to Paul McCartney in the '80s than 'The Frog Song'... A return to previous form certainly, and inspiring hope of even better things to come, *Flowers In The Dirt* is the sound of McCartney leaving the cosiness of his fame cocoon and actually competing again.”

TERRY STAUNTON, NME, JUNE 10, 1989

Flowers In The Dirt as there are songs, a belts-and-braces arrangement which ends up working to its disadvantage. Where the album would have benefited from a little of the freewheeling, off-the-cuff spirit of *Choba B CCCP*, instead McCartney hedges his bets by taking refuge in over-fussy arrangements, production gloss and a tendency towards meandering indolence. The hazy summer vibe of “Distractions” is charmingly apposite, but the early promise of the dubby “Rough Ride” fizzles out in aimless noodling. “Figure Of Eight” aims for good-rockin' abandon but bottles it, its lively spirit fettered by a caginess that prevents the album as a whole from really soaring.

“That Day Is Done” was later recorded to fine effect by Costello on The Fairfield Four's album, *I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray*, where it was revealed as a gorgeous, gospel-flavoured ballad with a moving lyric about the funeral of Costello's grandmother. Here, its still-obvious merits are shackled by an oddly clumpy, cacophonous rendition. Likewise, the original acoustic demo of the pair's final co-write, “Don't Be Careless Love”, presents a beautiful, harmonically complex composition in the spirit of The Beatles' “If I Fell”.

By the time the song had been worked over for the album, however, this evocation of late-night paranoia was overpowered by McCartney's strained vocal and an inelegant, stop-start arrangement. One of the album's nine co-producers, Mitchell Froom, later recalled a little testiness between the two writers over how best to serve these songs in the studio. Costello, it's fair to say, lost the argument.

Stretched to 55 minutes, *Flowers In The Dirt* is the first McCartney album specifically designed for CD, and it duly overstays its welcome, petering out with a whimper. “How Many People” is feather-light rock-reggae with a lyric to match (*“I want to be happy, I want to be free / I want to see ordinary people living peacefully”*), while “Motor Of Love” seems to be auditioning for the next Cliff Richard Christmas single.

But in the main, *Flowers In The Dirt* is a solid, appreciably engaged work which re-established McCartney as a commercial and creative force at a crucial time in his career. He went off to face the world for the first time in 10 years with a spring in his step and a new-found accommodation with his past.

TRACKMARKS FLOWERS IN THE DIRT

1 My Brave Face ★★★★
2 Rough Ride ★★★
3 You Want Her Too ★★★
4 Distractions ★★★
5 We Got Married ★★★
6 Put It There ★★★★
7 Figure Of Eight ★★
8 This One ★★★★
9 Don't Be Careless Love ★★★
10 That Day Is Done ★★★
11 How Many People ★★
12 Motor of Love ★★

Label: Parlophone/EMI

Produced by: Paul McCartney, Mitchell Froom, Neil Dorfsman, Elvis Costello, Trevor Horn, Steve Lipson, Chris Hughes, Ross Cullum, David Foster

Recorded at: Hog Hill Mill, Sussex; AIR, Olympic, Metropolis, Islands Studios (all London); Sunset Sound, Los Angeles; Mad Hatter Studios, Los Feliz

Personnel includes: Paul McCartney (vocals, guitars, bass, piano, synth, drums, tambourine, percussion, celeste, sitar, wine glasses, harmonium, Mellotron, flugelhorn, bongos, violin, keyboards, wood-saw), Linda McCartney (Minimoog, backing vocals, hand claps), Robbie McIntosh (guitar), Hamish Stuart (guitars, percussion, backing vocals), Chris Whitten (drums, percussion), Paul Wickens (keyboards), Elvis Costello (vocals, keyboards), David Gilmour (electric guitar), David Foster (keyboards), Dave Mattacks (drums), Trevor Horn (keyboards), Nicky Hopkins (piano), Clare Fischer (orchestral arrangements)

Highest chart position: UK 1; US 21

RELEASE DATE
FEBRUARY 2
1993

PAUL McCARTNEY

OFF THE GROUND

As *The Beatles Anthology* is prepared, a questing McCartney hunts for new ways to keep moving forward. Political controversy, anyone? BY PETER WATTS

AS THE EARLY '90s arrived, Paul McCartney found himself in a potentially awkward position. There was a mid-career renaissance – *Flowers In The Dirt*, his classical work and an MTV Unplugged performance at the Ed Sullivan Theatre. But he was also just about to engage most deeply with The Beatles' legacy for the first time in years through the *Anthology* project. In the midst of this came *Off The Ground*, a solid piece of houseclearing recorded largely with the same team that produced *Flowers In The Dirt* – Blair Cunningham replaced Chris Whitten on drums – and which, given the surrounding distractions, maintains an impressive focus and coherence.

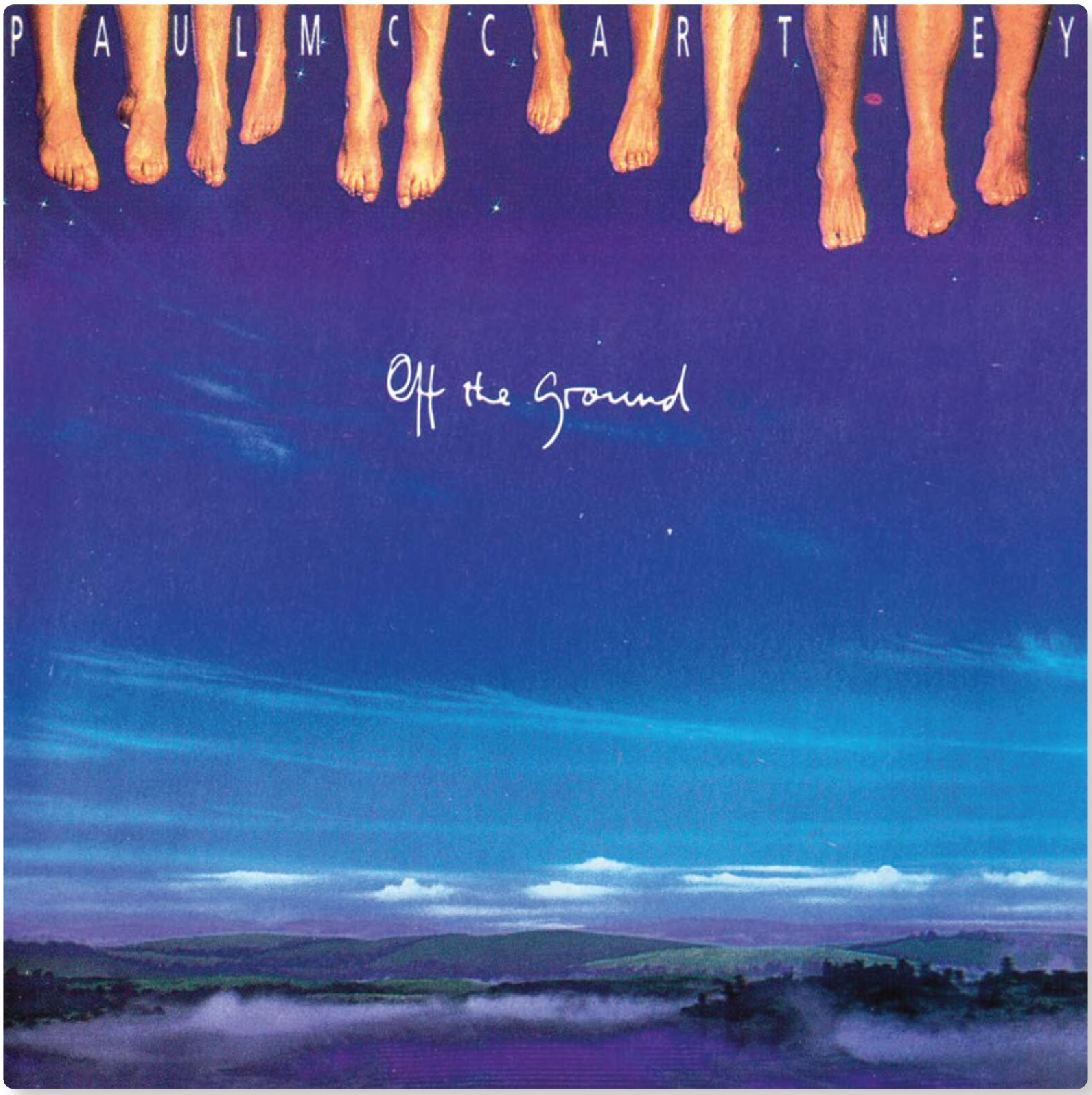
In the tidal push-and-pull between McCartney's conservatism and his desire for experimentation, *Off The Ground* is at its best when looking back: songs such as "Hope Of Deliverance" and "Get Out Of My Way" pay respect to the Buddy Holly, Everly Brothers and Chuck Berry singles of McCartney's youth. McCartney was conscious of this and, in a bid to give the album a bit of contemporary pep, he called in Youth of Killing Joke, asking him to remix some songs for 12" singles. Youth took things a stage further, rekindling McCartney's long-standing interest in electronica as the pair collaborated directly on what was essentially a techno album. *Strawberries Oceans Ships Forest*, consisting of remixed offcuts from the *Off The Ground* sessions, was released in November 1993 with McCartney and Youth pseudonymously disguised as The Fireman [*see page 120*].

Another collaboration created two of the album's stronger songs. "Mistress And Maid" and "The Lovers That Never Were" were co-written with Elvis Costello, held back from the *Flowers In The Dirt* sessions but by no means leftovers. The former in particular is one of McCartney's better solo offerings, an empathic study of a failing marriage and chauvinistic husband with thematic and musical nods to "Eleanor Rigby". Costello's hand is easy to detect on lines such as "*he studies the form of every appealing soubrette*". "The Lovers That Never Were" has some of Costello's innate sense of drama, opening with a slam of piano, and while it never quite builds on that arresting opening, it passes happily enough.

OFF THE GROUND MAINTAINS AN IMPRESSIVE FOCUS AND COHERENCE

If *Off The Ground* has a reputation for anything, it's as McCartney's political album, although in reality that is pretty tame. In loose swinger "Peace In The Neighbourhood", McCartney recalls being at "*the centre of a love vibration*" – another nod to the 1960s – and suggests everybody now should be "*helping each other out*". "C'mon People" is just as wishy-washy, a piano-led ballad calling people to "*let the fun begin*" because "*we've got a future and it's charging in*". The only time McCartney grapples with anything more specific is on "Looking For Changes", a song written with Linda, in which he attacks experiments on animals. "*I saw a rabbit with its eyes full of tears,*" sings an intense McCartney, heart firmly in the right place, but lyrical nose somewhat askew. "*The lab that owned her had been doing it for years/Why don't we make them pay for every last eye?/That couldn't cry its own tears/Do you know what I mean?*" Not really Paul, no. If a protest song is going to pack a punch, clarity is essential.

Stronger fare was to be found on three B-sides he released with the "Hope Of Deliverance" single: "Kicked Around No More" was about domestic



CRITICS' VERDICT

"There's the odd tune once in a while, but they get fewer as the years tick by; this may be his weakest album in 20 years... There is rare meaning in the chorus of 'Winedark Open Sea' where he at least approaches the heady passion of the title. But a chorus per album is not going to be enough to warrant the pension plan."

GAVIN MARTIN, NME
JANUARY 30, 1993

"All these ludicrous pleas for love, peace and understanding are underscored by the kind of music top hoteliers would avoid playing in their elevators on the grounds that it doesn't say enough."

THE STUD BROTHERS, MELODY MAKER,
FEBRUARY 6, 1993

violence, "Long Leather Coat" about animal rights and "Big Boys Bickering" about politicians "*fucking it up for everyone*". McCartney played the last during his Unplugged session and, when MTV refused to broadcast it, he received welcome publicity. "Hope Of Deliverance" itself is a sweet number, a melodic Top 20 hit that's in part a tribute to "(Marie's The Name) His Latest Flame" with some fine Spanish guitar and engaging delivery. Another throwback is "Get Out Of My Way", a bolshie Chuck Berry rocker that isn't exactly revolutionary, but at least McCartney sounds like he's having some fun.

This was no coincidence. McCartney had wanted the sessions to recall some of the spirit of his first recordings with The Beatles, when the band would do two three-hour sessions either side of lunch, laying down a couple of songs each time. "The songs didn't suffer," he said. "You just had to be more prepared... You really had to know your songs." So the band and co-producer Julian Mendelsohn gathered at McCartney's Hog Hill Mill Studios to try this out for themselves. Some songs were recorded quickly – "Biker Like An Icon" was a first take – but it still took time to come together, with sessions starting in December 1991 and ending in July the following year.

The album does, though, have something of a stripped-back feel, even if that's not immediately apparent on opener "Off The Ground", which pits handclaps and vocal gasps against a guitar that tries too hard to sound ugly. The simpler approach pays dividends on the "Mull Of Kintyre" roll of "Winedark Open Sea", or "I Owe It All To You", a gentle love song with a beautiful recurring central melody. It's such a slender thing it shouldn't be able to last the full five minutes, but McCartney somehow maintains interest and the lovely tail is a key part of the charm. Another minor beauty is "Golden Earth Girl", a sweet tune with nonsense lyrics and a Lennon-esque pun in the chorus ("*in eggshell seas*"/"*in excelsis*").

The weakness of the lyrics scarcely matters with a song like "Golden Earth Girl", but become harder to ignore on "Biker Like An Icon", a song about the danger of obsession that should be full of pathos but ends up dwindling to nothingness, partly because McCartney can't bring himself to explain precisely what took place. Ultimately, that didn't matter. *Off The Ground* – helped both by the success of "Hope Of Deliverance" and the minor controversy surrounding "Big Boys Bickering" – reconfirmed McCartney's position as an artist with a future, just as he embraced *Anthology* and plunged headfirst into the past.

TRACKMARKS OFF THE GROUND

1 Off The Ground ★★
2 Looking For Changes ★★
3 Hope Of Deliverance ★★★★
4 Mistress And Maid ★★★★
5 I Owe It All To You ★★★★
6 Biker Like An Icon ★★
7 Peace In The Neighbourhood ★★★
8 Golden Earth Girl ★★★★
9 The Lovers That Never Were ★★★
10 Get Out Of My Way ★★★
11 Winedark Open Sea ★★★★
12 C'Mon People ★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by Julian Mendelsohn and Paul McCartney
Recorded at Hog Hill Mill Studio, East Sussex
Personnel includes: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass, acoustic guitar, Spanish guitar, piano, drums, Mellotron, wurlitzer, celeste, sitar, ocarina, congas, percussion), Hamish Stuart (vocals, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass, 12-string guitar, piano, percussion, backing vocals), Linda McCartney (vocals, autoharp, celeste, Moog, harmonium, percussion, backing vocals, train whistle), Robbie McIntosh (electric guitar, acoustic guitar, Spanish guitar, slide guitar, mandolin, backing vocal), Wix Wickens (piano, clavinet, Hammond organ, accordion, drum machine, synthesiser, percussion, backing vocals), Blair Cunningham (drums, congas, backing vocals), Gordon Hunt (oboe), Susan Milan (flute), The Midnight Horns (horn section)
Highest chart position: UK 5; US 17

RELEASE DATE
MAY 5
1997

PAUL McCARTNEY

FLAMING PIE

"Somedays I laugh when I think how young we were..." An affectionate remembrance of Fab times past.

BY JOHN ROBINSON

NO MYTH, NO arguments, no drama. Just three men in their fifties sitting on the lawn, playing some songs on the ukulele. True enough, these "candid" parts of *The Beatles Anthology* TV series didn't do much for the band's mystique, but in 1995 they proposed a cosy alternate version of The Beatles: one more like the films, all warm fellow-feeling, and popping round each other's houses. A London Palladium, non-seditious Beatles. One the Queen might have approved of, in fact.

Paul McCartney liked that Beatles too. Frankly admitting it "came off the back of the *Anthology*", *Flaming Pie* was an album written with hatchet buried, by a man taking strength from his past rather than running from it. George Martin is periodically behind the glass, with Geoff Emerick at the controls. Jeff Lynne produces the bulk of it, as he had done "Free As A Bird". Ringo drums on a couple of numbers. The title, meanwhile, is a nod to the fans. It derived from John Lennon's amusing explanation of why The Beatles had an "a" in their name ("a man appeared on a flaming pie and said unto them... from hence you are Beatles with an 'a'").

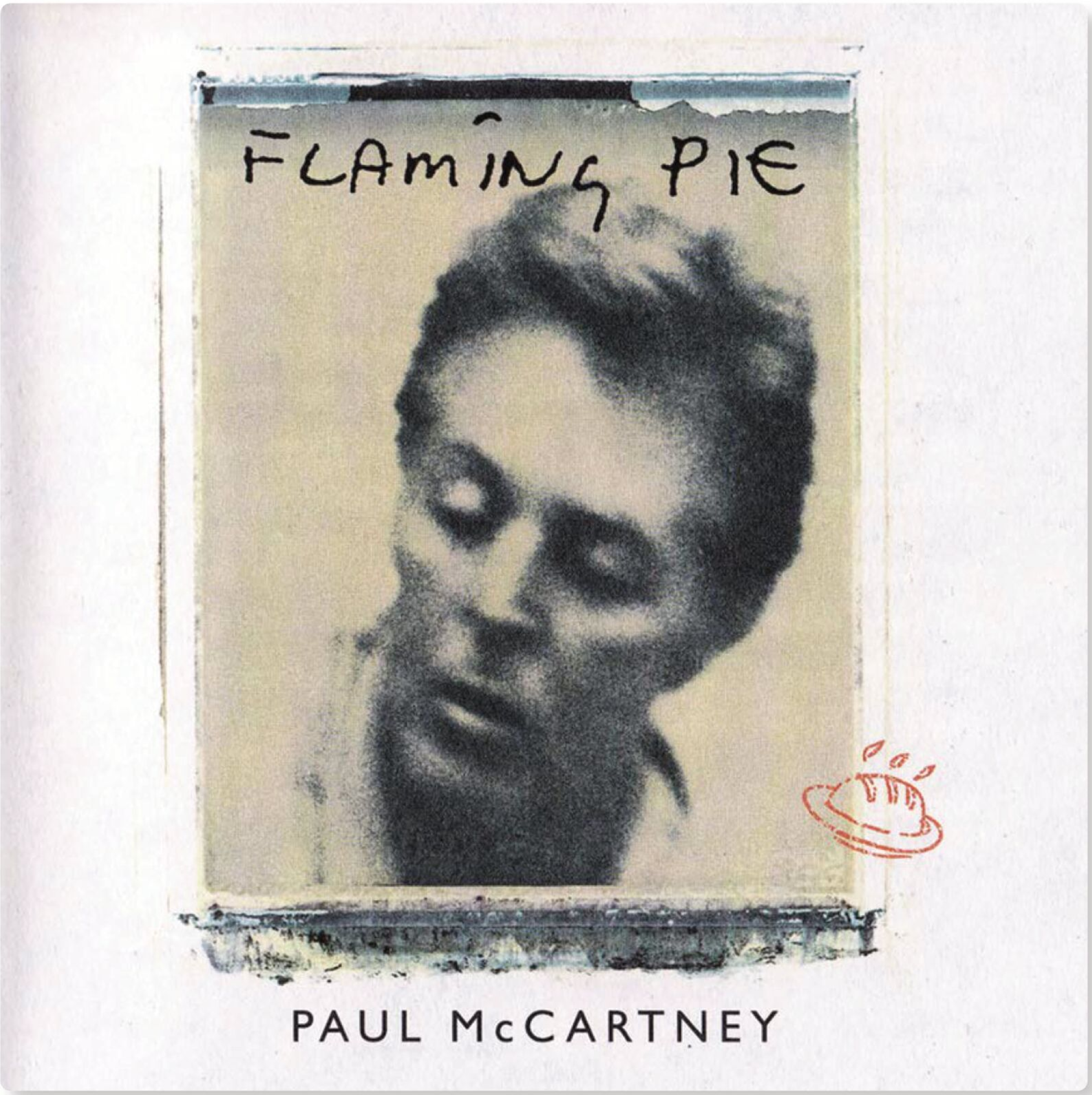
The album is rooted in history, and a healthy sense of its own importance. Perhaps having Mark Lewisohn provide sleevenotes jumps the gun a bit in this respect, but if these provide the occasional Alan Partridge moment ("I'd driven Linda to a photo session for one of her cookery assignments..."), at least it shows McCartney in a relatively unself-conscious mode. Someone who generally self-deprecates then thinks better of it, here he seems at ease with historical obligations in his work. He invited a camera crew along to film the recording.

McCartney wrote a preface to the album, and mentioned in it how he was inspired by the "standards" set by The Beatles, and also by the fun they had making the records ("The Beatles were not a serious group..."). This new album was approached, he said, with a similar sense of fun, but with the additional freedom to take as long a time as was needed. Sure enough, *Flaming Pie* was collated over some years (the big ballad "Beautiful Night" was recorded in 1992, but had been around since 1986), and is the product of a memory which if not yet almost full, is certainly fairly selective.

Album opener "The Song We Were Singing" sets the album's tone very nicely: older statesman rocker revisits the past in modern modes. A kind of "When We Was Fab", but with the irony and bad grammar taken out, here McCartney reduces the 1960s to a generalised memory of sitting on the floor and talking – ultimately united by popular song. The conversational tone of the verse is reminiscent, oddly, of Shack, while the chorus, this being 1997 after all, takes on a slightly disproportionately anthemic quality, towering over its surroundings.

The single "The World Tonight", which follows, again encapsulates his position as a man relevant not just to the past but to the future (*"I go so far back I'm in front of me!"* he sort-of-jokes at one point). It's similarly big of chorus, but it's the video that nails McCartney's tone on the record. In the clip, he is filmed just striding around random places with a CD boombox on his shoulder, an idea made faintly ridiculous by the fact that McCartney is quite a big bloke and the CD player looks a bit too small for him.

The clip captures his uniquely delicious Catch-22. On one level, he clearly likes the idea of being just some Paul McCartney interacting with the modern world like anybody else would. In another, he knows this behaviour is only remotely remarkable because he is, after all, Paul McCartney. The acoustic "Somedays" develops this idea, suggesting that for all the thumbs up, sound blokeness, we shouldn't confuse him with the man in the street (*"Don't ask me who won the match or scored the goal,"* he says, sounding very uncomfortable with sporting fixtures per se). Instead, he's lost in a



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Indeed, such is the lack of pretension surrounding *Flaming Pie*, it seems pretty much pointless firing any critical Napalm in his direction at all, the old spoilsport... For posterity then, *Flaming Pie* could be worse."

PAUL MOODY, NME, MAY 17, 1997

reverie of his extraordinary past times: *"Somedays I laugh,"* he sings, *"When I think how young we were..."*

As the record goes on, McCartney continues to engage with the past. There's a not amazing interaction with old pal Steve Miller ("Used To Be Bad") and another with Ringo, the ad hoc "Really Love You", about as close as Paul is ever going to get to Yoko's "Mind Train". "Flaming Pie" itself finds McCartney inhabiting the Lennon story as the central character – turning in an impressive, Bowie '73-style rocker on which he plays great barrelhouse piano.

It's a passionate song (*"Making love underneath the bed..."*), which makes reference to zipping up his fly. But as odd as that may appear at this stage of the game, maybe consider it as a song by a man whose wife was diagnosed with cancer two years previously, and is now putting a brave face on it. The closer "Great Day" is no classic, but it's a song that he and Linda used to play while the kids danced around, an example of the pulling together of public and private lives that he's engaged in since his first solo album.

Some moments could arguably have stayed private. "Little Willow", written after the death of Starr's first wife Maureen, is, however well-intentioned, a little schmaltzy. "Heaven On A Sunday" and "If You Wanna" shows what can sometimes happen in McCartney's writing when this master of pop classicism dresses down – he sounds sports casual. In the former, son James plays David Gilmour-style licks, while Dad writes ad copy for Saga holidays: *"Restful..."* he sings, *"like Devon on a Monday/ Cooling my fingers in the bay..."* The latter is avowedly a rocker, but instead makes what sounds like an awkward pass to a young friend: *"I'll take you to the coast for a holiday/You can be my guest/You can let me pay..."*

Traditional or modern, McCartney is best going entirely his own way, and the best bits of *Flaming Pie* are duly when he goes off message to himself, the talent completely overriding the stated mission. "Souvenir" may be the best thing on the album: a strange soul number, which segues into a heavy guitar section not unlike "I Want You". "Calico Skies", meanwhile, is completely different, a new song played like an old one – in the same acoustic mode as "Blackbird" or "Mother Nature's Son". It's incredibly tender, and its hookline (*"I will love you... for as long as you like/For the rest of my life..."*) is simply bang on, a wonderful example of undiminished melodic talent. On the documentary, he finishes it, then has a bit of a cuddle with Linda.

A musician who at 55 still meant a lot to a great many people, McCartney 1997 was exploring all sorts of avenues to maintain that goodwill. Animated films. Terrible paintings. Ambient music. Orchestral works. By a circuitous route, *Flaming Pie* brought him back to the form people loved him for in the first place, with a new respectability effortlessly in tow. What could you say to that? Apart from: arise, Sir Paul McCartney.

TRACKMARKS FLAMING PIE

1 The Song We Were Singing ★★★★
2 The World Tonight ★★★★
3 If You Wanna ★★
4 Somedays ★★★
5 Young Boy ★★
6 Calico Skies ★★★★
7 Flaming Pie ★★★
8 Heaven On A Sunday ★
9 Used To Be Bad ★★
10 Souvenir ★★★★
11 Little Willow ★
12 Really Love You ★★★★
13 Beautiful Night ★★
14 Great Day ★★

Label: Parlophone

Produced by: George Martin, Jeff Lynne, Paul McCartney

Recorded at: Hog Hill Mill, Sussex; Abbey Road, London; Sun Valley, Idaho

Personnel includes: Paul McCartney (vocals, guitar, keys, bass, drums), Linda McCartney (bk vocals), James McCartney (guitar), Ringo Starr (drums), Jeff Lynne (guitars), Steve Miller (guitar), George Martin (orchestration)

Highest chart position: UK 2; US 2

RELEASE DATE
OCTOBER 4
1999

PAUL McCARTNEY

RUN DEVIL RUN

In mourning for Linda, McCartney again finds solace in the blue jean bops of his youth.

BY ROB HUGHES

IN MAY 1999, Paul McCartney attended the Pride Of Britain ceremony at London's Dorchester Hotel. It was his first official UK appearance since the death of his wife Linda 13 months earlier. Presenting the Linda McCartney Award for Animal Welfare, he was visibly emotional as he admitted: "I have been crying all year..."

McCartney had ignored friends' advice to busy himself in work after Linda's demise, deciding instead to grieve in his own time. *Rushes*, his second collaboration with Youth as ambient duo The Fireman, landed in September '98, but he was in no hurry to pick up his solo career. It wasn't until the following March that he felt ready to re-enter the studio.

Run Devil Run was an unabashed rock'n'roll record that yanked at his old-school roots. It found McCartney reworking a bunch of jukebox favourites from his teens, some familiar ("All Shook Up", "Brown Eyed Handsome Man", "Lonesome Town"), others less so ("She Said Yeah", "No Other Baby", "Coquette"). Rounding out the selection were three fresh tunes, styled in a similar manner. Though the album was more than just an exercise in nostalgia. Rather, it seemed to be about reconnection, as if looking to bridge some lost part of himself.

Then there was the way he went about it. Just as The Beatles had done, McCartney booked Studio Two, the Fabs' preferred corner of Abbey Road. He stipulated the same routine: start at 10:30am, break for lunch at one, then be gone by half-past five. The idea was to rip through songs in two takes, then move on. Less talk, more action. Not only did this open a spiritual link to the early Beatles, but a physical one.

There were also echoes of his past in the formidable team he assembled. Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, already a trusted ally via his work on *Back To The Egg*, *Give My Regards To Broad Street* and *Flowers In The Dirt*, was drafted in on lead guitar. Co-producer Chris Thomas had first worked with McCartney on 'The White Album', then later with Wings. The rest of the band were seasoned campaigners too: ex-Pirates guitarist Mick Green, Deep Purple's Ian Paice and Fairport's Dave Mattacks swapping shifts on drums, Pete Wingfield and Geraint Watkins sharing keyboard duties. Sticking tight to the brief, they didn't hang about. After five days they had 20 tracks. "As we were doing it I thought, 'God, I haven't done this since I was 14'," McCartney later recalled. "And I got the same feeling back."

Given that "Be-Bop-A-Lula" was the first single McCartney ever bought, *Run Devil Run* had to start with Gene Vincent. The choice of cover, though, was another 45 from '56, "Blue Jean Bop". It was a song that he and John Lennon used to listen to together as teenagers.

Here it surges along on a great wave of electric skiffle, marked by terse guitar runs from the Gilmour-Green axis and a vocal zinging with splash echo. The Beatles had covered three Larry Williams tunes (most famously "Dizzy Miss Lizzy") and now McCartney took aim at "She Said Yeah". It's one of the highlights of the album, a frenetic dash that feels more punk than rock'n'roll, performed with the kind of burning abandon that might've been hotwired from Hamburg circa 1961. McCartney yelps in all the right places while his two guitarists tough it out with Wingfield's barrelling piano.

> IT'S ALL PERFORMED WITH BURNING ABANDON, MORE PUNK THAN ROCK'N'ROLL

The title track, the first of those three McCartney originals, doesn't stop for breath

QUICK E
DRUGS
MONEY ORDERS
RUN DEVIL RUN
PHARMACY
City Maps
Cameras
Batteries
Pet Supplies
Jewelry
Reading Glasses
Sun Glasses
Auto Supplies
Copies Made
Vitamins
FREE Blood
Pressure Test
Perfumes
Colognes
Canes
Hats
GROW YOUR HAIR
TABS & OINTMENT
HERBAL VIAGRA
Quality Natural Vitamins & Herbals
CLEARANCE
SALE
BUY 2 GET 1 FREE
SPIRITUAL PRODUCTS
PROTECT FROM
TROUBLE MAKERS
MEDDLING RELATIVES
EVIL NEIGHBOURS
Corn & Callous
Remover Cream
2 FOR
$1.00

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The highpoints are ballads driven by Mac's reverberating Hofner bass – particularly Ricky Nelson's 'Lonesome Town' and Carl Perkins' 'Movie Magg'. Otherwise hardly a landmark, but no disgrace, either."

GAVIN MARTIN, UNCUT, NOVEMBER 1999

either. A story song set in the Deep South, with a rock'n'roll lexicon of holy rollers, picked cotton and Alabama swamps, it's a '50s-styled house-shaker that finds him locating his inner Chuck Berry.

Classic American R'n'B provides the groove for another new one, "What It Is". McCartney had begun writing it on piano at home with Linda, now it became a tribute. Like many of his best compositions over the years, it's disarmingly direct – "*You are what it is/That makes the world go around for me/You are what I need/You make me feel good about myself*" – its simplicity echoed by a beautifully concise guitar solo.

It's tempting to imagine "Lonesome Town", initially a hit for Ricky Nelson, as a companion piece. Here was a mid-tempo ballad with McCartney at his most bereft, the lyrics strewn with broken hearts and dreams. It was a tune that he and Linda had first listened to independently in the '50s – she in New York, he in Liverpool – and one they shared later. It clearly meant a lot. When McCartney appeared onstage, unscheduled, at his late wife's tribute concert at the Royal Albert Hall in April '99, "Lonesome Town" was one of three songs he chose to play.

Another direct route to yesteryear was "No Other Baby". A chugging ballad with more than a whiff of the Everlys, the tune had once been produced by George Martin, pre-Beatles, for skiffle outfit The Vipers. It's one of the more affecting moments on *Run Devil Run*, with McCartney sounding nakedly vulnerable and Gilmour contributing some hushed backing vocals.

Most of the uptempo songs sound slightly unhinged. Big Joe Turner's "Honey Hush" almost tips over into metal, with its evil riff and waspish solo. "Shake A Hand" finds McCartney out-ripping Little Richard to the extent that you fear he might well have given himself a hernia. And "I Got Stung", a blizzard of a thing with a crashing finale, makes Elvis' version look relatively tame.

Run Devil Run was evidently terrific fun to make. As a listening experience too, it's way more engaging than an album of old covers by a 57-year-old rocker has any right to be. McCartney went about promotional duties with renewed gusto, showing up on Jools Holland's *Later...*, appearing alongside Lulu on the *National Lottery Draw Show* and sealing his back-to-roots return with a filmed gig at The Cavern in December.

He was also keen to drive home the album's point. "It will reassure anyone who thinks 'he's gone all classical now' that that's not the case," McCartney stated. "It's just another of the things I do. I still love my kind of rock'n'roll music."

TRACKMARKS RUN DEVIL RUN

1 Blue Jean Bop ★★★★
2 She Said Yeah ★★★★★
3 All Shook Up ★★★
4 Run Devil Run ★★★★
5 No Other Baby ★★★★
6 Lonesome Town ★★★★
7 Try Not To Cry ★★★
8 Movie Magg ★★★
9 Brown Eyed Handsome Man ★★★★
10 What It Is ★★★★
11 Coquette ★★★
12 I Got Stung ★★★★★
13 Honey Hush ★★★★
14 Shake A Hand ★★★★
15 Party ★★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: Chris Thomas, Paul McCartney
Recorded at: Abbey Road Studios, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass guitar, electric guitar), David Gilmour (electric guitar, lap steel guitar, backing vocals), Mick Green (electric guitar), Ian Paice (drums, percussion), Dave Mattacks (drums, percussion), Pete Wingfield (piano, hammond organ), Geraint Watkins (Wurlitzer, piano), Chris Hall (accordion)
Highest chart position: UK 12; US 27

RELEASE DATE
NOVEMBER 12
2001

PAUL McCARTNEY

DRIVING RAIN

A new start: adventures in LA and India, fresh bandmates and, most significantly, a recently arrived *"queen of my heart"*.

BY JASON ANDERSON

WHEN IT COMES to providing high drama to voyeurs fascinated by other people's misery, or solace to listeners who feel similarly bereft, break-up albums are bound to command more veneration than their opposite: totally-in-love-and-feeling-fantastic albums. That enviable state of giddiness and exhilaration may work perfectly well as fuel for songs of a summery disposition – after all, the world would be a far darker place had "Happy Together" never existed. But over the course of a whole album, those rosier expressions have a tendency to grate in a manner that's not the case with, say, a *Blood On The Tracks* or a *Boatman's Call*.

That may explain the urge to grimace at some of the couplets that fill the many odes to McCartney's new love Heather Mills on *Driving Rain*. This reaction may be even more pronounced in the light of the couple's bitter divorce proceedings in 2008. When faced with a relentless accumulation of lines like *"You come walking through my door/ Like the one I've been waiting for"* (from *Driving Rain*'s title track) and *"There must have been magic/The night that we met/If I hadn't stopped you/I'd always regret"* (from "Magic"), even the most soft-hearted McCartney fan may agree with a sentiment famously expressed in "Cynthia", an early story by Aldous Huxley: "I can sympathise with someone's pains but not their pleasures. There's something curiously boring about somebody else's happiness."

Thankfully, *Driving Rain* doesn't sound all that ecstatic in places. In the stirring opener "Lonely Road", there's room for the feelings of grief over Linda McCartney's passing three years earlier, feelings that were so plainly and memorably expressed in *Run Devil Run*, albeit mostly in the words of other songwriters. And to believe that the album's emotional register is entirely determined by his ardour for Mills – or "Heather", as per the musical tribute that describes her as *"the queen of my heart"* – is to ignore the currents of pain and confusion in "She's Given Up Talking", a vivid and surprisingly eerie vignette about a young girl driven into silence by unspecified traumas, sung in an often distorted vocal by McCartney to the accompaniment of his fuzz-laden Hofner bass and a woozy guitar line by Rusty Anderson.

Another major point in *Driving Rain*'s favour is the spontaneous approach that prevailed in the sessions with producer David Kahne, conducted over five weeks in February and June of 2001 in A&M's former studios in Los Angeles. Again inspired by the methodology he and Lennon used on The Beatles' early albums, McCartney got in the habit of bringing a fresh song to the studio in the morning and letting the band have at it over the course of the day, thereby compelling the players to think on their feet. This "no homework" strategy must have been especially daunting for the musicians, seeing as none of them had played with McCartney before. *Driving Rain* marks the debut for Anderson and drummer Abe Laboriel Jr, both of whom remain regulars in McCartney's group. But for the most part, the music is as endearingly rough-hewn as the grainy photo on the cover, shot by its subject with a Casio watch camera in what may be described as a proto-selfie.

As it did on *Run Devil Run*, the set-up compelled McCartney to largely stick with his vocals and bass-playing, and "Spinning On An Axis" certainly benefits from the loose, funky feel that emanates from his Rickenbacker. He sounds just as engaged with the results in "About You", a chunky rocker with an urgent edge and a sense of

HE SOUNDS EXCITED, NIMBLE AND IMMERSED IN EVERY MOMENT AT HAND

CRITICS' VERDICT

"*Driving Rain* places a premium on spontaneity and is mostly performed live with minimal overdubbing… Ironically, the most successful tracks are the most polished and produced of the 15… Possibly a grower, this album is certainly better than anything Macca's done for some while."

IAN MacDONALD, UNCUT, JANUARY 2002

"*Driving Rain* is supposed to be raw, spontaneous and unpolished, when in fact it's perfectly pleasant, unable to resist the McCartney default modes of jauntiness and sentimentality."

VICTORIA SEGAL, NME, NOVEMBER 24, 2001

fullness fostered by keyboardist Gabe Dixon's Wurlitzer and Hammond organ parts. Even the aforementioned "Heather" has a surprising momentum despite the moony lyrics at its tail end – indeed, the pleasing pile-up of guitar riffs and Kahne's string samples lend it the air of a Wings production rendered simply, efficiently and on the cheap. The same could be said of "Your Loving Flame", which might've swelled to epic-sized proportions had it surfaced in 1975, but has an appealing modesty and stridency in its incarnation here.

A holiday in India at the beginning of the year yielded several songs for *Driving Rain*, including "Riding Into Jaipur", an airy piece of cod-subcontinental whimsy embossed with tampura twiddling by Anderson, deftly deployed African drum samples by Laboriel and a lovely cascading piano part by Dixon. It would've undoubtedly pleased George.

"Riding Into Jaipur" would have also ended the album in the light, saying-yes-to-life mood that McCartney establishes in the early going. Instead, *Driving Rain* concludes with the two weakest songs that cannot be blamed on Mills. Trundling on for over 10 minutes, the semi-grunge epic "Rinse The Raindrops" is a toothless latter-day descendant of "Helter Skelter", not improved by McCartney's haggard vocals. (Other performances would be affected by the strain his voice sustained while he berated a duplicitous carpet salesman during the India trip.)

Then there's "Freedom", included as an unlisted track on the *Driving Rain* CD since it was added after the artwork was finished. Inspired by the 9/11 attacks on New York – which McCartney witnessed in the distance while sitting on a plane on the tarmac at JFK Airport – it is clearly heartfelt and made for an appropriately rousing closer for the Concert For New York City that McCartney mounted at Madison Square Garden on October 20. But it's also simplistic and plodding even by the standards of hastily written pop protest anthems and riddled with lines – *"We will fight for the right to live in freedom"* – that encouraged a discomfitingly militaristic interpretation. Eventually retiring the song from his live set, he'd lay the blame on President George W Bush for the confusion over the song's intended meaning. However, he didn't exactly clear up the matter when he gave this rambling explanation to Pitchfork in 2007: "It was written from the point of view of, as I say, someone coming from a repressive… like let's say, [*a*] European Jew coming to America. He just got away from Hitler. That kind of thing. Or that – in all its forms. That particularly happens in America. It happens here in the UK but America I'd reckon is a global target of people escaping oppression."

Driving Rain, though, remains stirring and vital for the manner in which it captures McCartney at a more exuberant and hopeful juncture in his relationships – not just with Heather Mills, but with the legacy that could sometimes restrict his manoeuvres as an artist. Four decades into the game, he sounds excited, nimble and thoroughly immersed in every moment at hand.

TRACKMARKS DRIVING RAIN

1 Lonely Road ★★★
2 From A Lover To A Friend ★★★
3 She's Given Up Talking ★★★★
4 Driving Rain ★★
5 I Do ★★★
6 Tiny Bubble ★★★
7 Magic ★★
8 Your Way ★★★
9 Spinning On An Axis ★★★★
10 About You ★★★
11 Heather ★★★
12 Back In The Sunshine Again ★★
13 Your Loving Flame ★★★
14 Riding Into Jaipur ★★★
15 Rinse The Raindrops ★★
16 (hidden) Freedom ★

Label: MPL/Hear Music, Parlophone
Produced by: David Kahne
Recorded at: Henson Recording Studio, LA
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, bass guitar, guitars and piano), Rusty Anderson (guitars, backing vocals), Abe Laboriel Jr (drums, percussion, backing vocals), Gabe Dixon (keyboards, backing vocals), David Kahne (programming, orchestral samples, synth, guitar)
Highest chart position: UK 46; US 26

RELEASE DATE
SEPTEMBER 12
2005

PAUL McCARTNEY

CHAOS AND CREATION IN THE BACKYARD

Radiohead's producer gently teases Sir Paul out of his safety zone. "This Never Happened Before..."

BY JON DALE

McCARTNEY'S FIRST ALBUM in four years, *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*, was born, in some ways, of its predecessor. McCartney started recording with *Driving Rain*'s producer, David Kahne, but the sessions were ultimately scrapped. Following a suggestion from George Martin, McCartney called in Nigel Godrich, known for his exploratory work with Radiohead and Beck, to produce the album. A meticulous figure unafraid of challenging his charges to push themselves far beyond their known parameters, Godrich was an intriguing choice to make, particularly given McCartney's known fondness for control of the recording process. As McCartney told *Billboard*, "[*the*] first week, I came in with my live band, thinking that might be the way we'd go. But [*Godrich*] started to intimate toward the end of the week that he wanted, as he put it, to take me out of my safety zone, to do something different."

In reality, that quote is only half-right. For what Godrich was pointing toward, in essence, was a return to the one-man vision of albums like *McCartney* and *McCartney II*, burnished to shine within the studio and control room, rather than being recorded at home. And indeed, McCartney himself plays good portions of the instrumentation on *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*, with collaborators like powerpop ingénue Jason Falkner dropping in for detailing. It led to another deceptively simple album, which seems to breathe 'of a piece', as though the songs almost were drawn from the same silver thread of melody, each one a variation on a melancholy theme. It's McCartney in reflective, at times pensive mode, only cutting loose on a few songs, where yet again he nails his ability to toss off a great pop song seemingly without effort.

That's how *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard* starts, with the wonderful "Fine Line", also the album's first single, a rich, glorious stomp built on pounding pianos and sinuous shakers. If it's McCartney pro forma, it's a glorious formula to share with the world. But after this opening punch, McCartney reels back quickly, with Godrich's piano loops creating a hallucinatory bed for the gentle harmonium and vocal duo that eases into "How Kind Of You". This is where *Chaos And Creation...* really kicks off, McCartney unspooling a song of hymnal devotion and appreciation. The song shivers to its conclusion, moving through passages of darkness and resolution, the better to inch into "Jenny Wren", an acoustic lament that takes unexpected chordal turns, leaving the melody hanging in unresolved ambiguity.

"Fine Line", "How Kind Of You" and "Jenny Wren" make for an unbeatable opening trio of songs. To be honest, *Chaos And Creation...* never quite reaches those heights again, but there is still plenty of pleasure to be found through the album, with McCartney writing and singing with a rare lucidity.

"At The Mercy" has McCartney following the piano melody with his voice, recalling, quite unexpectedly, Robert Wyatt's lambent torch songs. "Friends To Go", which McCartney claims was guided by George Harrison's spirit, is warm-hearted, gentle acoustica. "English Tea" plays to the gallery a little, its invocation of times of yore playing into the same cultural straitjacket as songs like "Eleanor Rigby", but gently soured by the abstraction of the opening strings. "Too Much Rain" closes off the first half

> CHAOS AND CREATION... IS ONE OF McCARTNEY'S MOST VITAL ALBUMS IN DECADES

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The man responsible for some of the most hummable choruses in the pop canon has all but dispensed with traditional structures this time around, instead creating richly layered song patterns that meander with deceptively aimless purpose… Macca's most sustained work of imagination and surprise since *Band On The Run*."

JON WILDE, UNCUT, OCTOBER, 2005

"McCartney has come out of his safety zone and challenged himself in a way not seen since his first solo album. But the feeling remains that the one person who could really inspire him to write one final classic record was tragically murdered in 1980."

JULIAN MARSHALL, NME, SEPTEMBER 10, 2005

of *Chaos And Creation*… reflecting on the cycle of time and the overbearing force of melancholy, with McCartney etching beautiful details into the song, like the drift of the autoharp that shades in the margins.

The second half of *Chaos And Creation*… dips a little – there are a few rote songs here which roil the metaphoric waters, some moments of coasting, such as "Follow Me" and "Promise To You Girl", both serviceable pop songs which don't add much to the winning streak of the first half of the record. It's better, then, to focus on those moments where McCartney and Godrich come together, the songwriter and the details man, to essay songs of depth and candour. "Riding To Vanity Fair" feels like the centrepiece of the album, a five-minute revelation that levitates on gently held strings and ambient incident, a two-note xylophone tinkling out in the distance while the song's spine slowly twists and turns, McCartney singing out about heartbreak and self-reflection.

The closing songs, "This Never Happened Before" and "Anyway", almost return to that fine opening trio of songs, particularly "Anyway", which lays out a melancholy line, McCartney's voice particularly winning when he opens with what, in lesser hands, could be hammy. "*If you love me, won't you call me,*" is hardly a line to inspire confidence in heightened creative powers, but somehow – and this has always been one of McCartney's great gifts to the art of song – there's a particular grain to his singing, a peculiar warmth to the voice, that grabs hold of simple, universal lines and invests them with ear-tickling intimacy.

By the mid-noughties, McCartney was on a fairly strong creative streak, though as with many artists shouldering the weight of historical significance, it felt like some of the better songs on his contemporaneous albums were passing listeners by, suffering from a kind of neglect through familiarity. Even given some of the strong material on previous albums, *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard* stands tall and proud about McCartney's solo albums. It's an example of a headstrong but inquisitive songwriter, moving into the fifth decade of his songwriting career, meeting and gently butting heads with a strong-willed, tactfully disruptive producer, and in the process making one of his most vital albums in decades. The songs come across as though they poured out of McCartney, but they're arranged meticulously, the better to show off their multiple hues, their emotional complexities and subtleties. It's a music that's alive to the moment, even (or, indeed, especially) when at its most autumnal.

TRACKMARKS CHAOS AND CREATION IN THE BACKYARD

1 Fine Line ★★★★
2 How Kind Of You ★★★★
3 Jenny Wren ★★★★
4 At The Mercy ★★★★
5 Friends To Go ★★★★
6 English Tea ★★★
7 Too Much Rain ★★★★
8 A Certain Softness ★★★
9 Riding To Vanity Fair ★★★★
10 Follow Me ★★★
11 Promise To You Girl ★★★
12 This Never Happened Before ★★★★
13 Anyway ★★★★

+ I've Only Got Two Hands ★★

Label: Parlophone
Produced by: Nigel Godrich
Recorded at: RAK, London; AIR, London; Ocean Way Studios, LA
Personnel: Paul McCartney (instruments), Millennia Ensemble (strings, brass), The Los Angeles Music Players (strings), Nigel Godrich (piano, guitar loops), Pedro Eustache (duduk), Jason Falkner (electric and classical guitar), Rusty Anderson, Brian Ray (acoustic guitar), James Gadson (drums), Joey Waronker (bass drum, bongos, shaker), Abe Laboriel Jr (percussion, block, tambourine)
Highest chart position: UK 10; US 6

RELEASE DATE
JUNE 4
2007

PAUL McCARTNEY

MEMORY ALMOST FULL

McCartney ruminates on a life well lived. Will you still need him when he's 64? BY GRAEME THOMSON

ON THE SURFACE, everything about *Memory Almost Full* seems to point backwards. From the title, to its theme of retrospective reflection, to the fact that at least half of it was recorded before its predecessor, *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*, the evidence suggests a kind of retreat. Why, then, does it sound so fresh, so vital, so forward-facing?

Almost immediately after finishing up work with Nigel Godrich, McCartney returned to the album he'd started in the autumn of 2003. Between March 2006 and early 2007 he took another look at the songs, wrote and recorded some more, and pulled the results together into a new record, most of which he performed alone. The basic tracks for five songs – "Mr Bellamy", "Ever Present Past", "Gratitude", "Nod Your Head" and "See Your Sunshine" – were recorded in a single day.

McCartney's work had become steadily more ruminative since *Flaming Pie*. On *Memory Almost Full* the past looms larger than ever, but here it acts primarily as an energising force. Perhaps leaving a hollowed-out EMI for Starbucks' Hear Music label (the musical equivalent of the ravens leaving the Tower) engendered a sense of liberation. It's probably also no coincidence that this bold statement of creative virility came at a time when the acrimonious fall-out from his marriage to Heather Mills was turning McCartney into a tabloid sure-thing, his private life plastered all over the front pages. Just as when he had last endured a very public divorce – in 1970, from The Beatles – notoriety seemed to spur the urge to experiment.

Whatever the reason, *Memory Almost Full* features a bunch of fine, artily askew pop and rock songs propelled by a questing spirit of adventure. It boasts an abundance of melodic riches and a constantly shifting musical backdrop which succeeds in being playfully self-referential – there are constant nods to Wings and '70s solo McCartney, as well as the bands he inspired, such as 10cc and ELO – without sounding jaded.

THE PAST LOOMS LARGER THAN EVER, BUT ACTS AS AN ENERGISING FORCE...

Mind you, it takes a while to find its sea legs. Opener "Dance Tonight", inspired by tinkering with a new instrument, the mandolin, is the kind of disingenuously simple campfire strum – complete with kick drum thud and faux-naïf whistling – that bodes none too well for what's to come. "Ever Present Past" is better, a spritely piece of power pop which introduces the unifying theme on a record of disparate musical elements. McCartney is "*searching for the time that has gone so fast*" and trying to find meaning in "*the things I think I did.*" On the languorous "You Tell Me" – a hazy recollection of all those summers "*when it never rained*", the air heavy with butterflies and hummingbirds – he sounds groggy, almost fearful, acutely aware of the tricks memory can play. "*Were we there, was it real?*" he sings. "*Is it truly how I feel? Maybe...*"

"That Was Me" is a more exact and exercised swagger through his back pages. A sparse, rollicking rockabilly number with wicked walking bass, it finds McCartney looking back with barely concealed astonishment at the distance between where he started and where he ended up. "*That was me/ Merseybeatin' with the band/Sweating cobwebs/Under contract/In the cellar/On TV... When I think that all this stuff can make a life,*

memory almost full

CRITICS' VERDICT

"McCartney is no longer striving to satisfy a Lennonesque foil, a quest which began with 1989's Costello collaboration *Flowers In The Dirt*. Instead, he downloads random memories in his journey from Speke to superstardom with warmth and more than a dash of wry humour."

PAUL MOODY, UNCUT, JULY 2007

"This is more tuneful and exuberant than 2005's underwhelming Nigel Godrich-produced *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*. That's not to say it's *Revolver*, but at least the Beatle's playing to his strengths."

ALAN WOODHOUSE, NME, JUNE 9, 2007

it's pretty hard to take it in." On the languid "Feet In The Clouds" he's the classroom dreamer, recalled from the midst of a bizarre but bracing mix of Vocoder, strings and fluttering falsetto.

These two tracks are stitched into a five-song medley, a suite which takes the listener on a loose journey from childhood to death, evoking memories of the glory days of the second side of *Abbey Road* along the way.

Memory Almost Full is nothing so defined as a concept album, however. Some songs are just songs. On "Gratitude", McCartney dusts down his big, belting "Oh Darling!" voice for a ripsnorting soul ballad which acknowledges the loss of Linda (*"I was lonely, living with a memory"*) before extending an olive branch to his soon to be ex-wife. *"I should stop loving you/Think what you put me through/But I don't want to lock my heart away."* "The album was done before, during and after our separation," McCartney later explained. "I didn't go back and take out any songs to do with her."

"Only Mama Knows" is a crackling rocker, Macca *"on the road to ruin"* and channelling Wings' *Band On The Run* by way of Queen. "Mr Bellamy" is less straightforward, a very Blur-like character song about an eccentric fellow seeking solitude – or perhaps it's just a cat stuck up a tree. With its cast of voices, shifting rhythms and rippling piano motif, it harks back to McCartney's first two experimental solo albums, recalling the days when he pulled dizzying handbrake turns in order to squeeze numerous striking melodic and lyrical ideas into four minutes.

The extraordinary "House Of Wax", on the other hand, heads for new ground. A brooding, echo-laden rumination on hidden inspiration, decay and destruction, it conveys an epic sadness, not unlike something from The Cure's *Faith*. It climaxes with McCartney's voice breaking with emotion and a scorching, crying blues guitar solo.

Notwithstanding the album's brief coda of "Nod Your Head", a rowdy screamer which pledges kinship with the not-quite-nonsensical "Why Don't We Do It In The Road?", this album of shadows and sunlight closes with "The End Of The End", a warm, richly melodic piano ballad in which McCartney envisions the *"day that I die/ I'd like jokes to be told/And stories of old to be rolled out like carpets/That children have played on and laid on."*

Like much of what has come before, it's a stern rejoinder to anyone who feels the man's work tends to lack emotional depth. Exactly two weeks before his 65th birthday, Paul McCartney delivered an album which ranks among his best, which makes *Memory Almost Full* very good indeed.

TRACKMARKS MEMORY ALMOST FULL

1 Dance Tonight ★★★
2 Ever Present Past ★★★★
3 See Your Sunshine ★★★
4 Only Mama Knows ★★★★
5 You Tell Me ★★★★
6 Mr Bellamy ★★★★
7 Gratitude ★★★
8 Vintage Clothes ★★★★
9 That Was Me ★★★★
10 Feet In The Clouds ★★★
11 House Of Wax ★★★★
12 The End Of The End ★★★★
13 Nod Your Head ★★★

Label: Hear Music
Produced by: David Kahne

Recorded at: Abbey Road, AIR, RAK Studios, London; Henson Recording Studios, Los Angeles; Hog Hill Mill Studios, Sussex; Ocean Way Studios, LA
Personnel: Paul McCartney (all vocals and instruments, except "Only Mama Knows", "You Tell Me", "Vintage Clothes", "That Was Me", "Feet In The Clouds", and "House Of Wax", where he's accompanied by...) Paul Wickens (keyboards), Rusty Anderson (lead guitar), Abe Laboriel Jr (drums), Brian Ray (rhythm guitar)
Highest chart position: UK 5; US 3

RELEASE DATE
FEBRUARY 6
2012

PAUL McCARTNEY

KISSES ON THE BOTTOM

The master's very own sentimental journey, as a cabal of jazz stars help McCartney tackle the Great American Songbook.

BY JOHN LEWIS

WHEN PAUL McCARTNEY announced that his new album was a tribute to the Great American Songbook, the big surprise was that he hadn't actually done one before. He had often talked of his fondness for jazz standards, of being introduced to big-band jazz by his father Jim, and of his family belting out Broadway showtunes on New Year's Eve around the family piano.

Tin Pan Alley creations were also part of the formidable inventory of popular songs that The Beatles churned out during their Hamburg residencies. Some of these standards – "Besame Mucho", "Ain't She Sweet", "Till There Was You", "The Sheik Of Araby" – found their way onto albums, but dozens more by the likes of Gershwin, Porter and Richard Rodgers were committed to memory, feeding into McCartney's own songwriting style. His songs often come with the fixtures and fittings of the Broadway standard – unexpected intros, sturdy verses and choruses, and a middle-eight that modulates into the subdominant or the relative minor. It was McCartney's songs, more than Lennon's, that ended up in the jazz songbook – dozens have been covered by such illustrious names as Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Lee Morgan and Roland Kirk.

Kisses On The Bottom – its title cheekily lifted from the lyrics of the opening track, the Fats Waller favourite "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter" – started when McCartney met veteran jazz producer Tommy LiPuma and suggested making an album of standards. "We were looking for songs that were a little more unusual," says McCartney. "Even I didn't know some of them." LiPuma enlisted Diana Krall – the wife of McCartney's old collaborator Elvis Costello – as pianist and musical director, and assembled a band of jazz A-listers in the Studio A at the top of the Capitol Records Tower in Hollywood, the same place where Sinatra, Dean Martin and Nat King Cole recorded.

The result is quite different from those celebrations of the Great American Songbook that have become de rigueur for gentlemen at a certain point in their career, be it Rod Stewart, Barry Manilow, Bryan Ferry or Robbie Williams. They use these songs as a vehicle for their vocal chops, but even McCartney's most ardent fans will never claim that his voice is a particularly flashy instrument. Instead of trying to show off, he croons (into Nat Cole's old ribbon mic) almost conversationally, in that calming, balm-like voice, cleaving to the contours of each song, maintaining a hint of fragilty in the upper register.

Particularly successful are the songs suited to his vocal range. Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer's "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive" fits him like a glove, his voice gliding over the band's restrained groove with the grace of a Fred Astaire dance routine. On a raggy version of Fats Waller's "My Very Good Friend The Milkman" McCartney duets with himself, shifting between a hoarse, whispered vocal and a sprightly whistle.

A coma-paced version of "Bye Bye Blackbird" also works surprisingly well. It was always a Beatles favourite, one that Ringo Starr covered on his 1970 solo debut *Sentimental Journey* (incidentally, the first LP of showtunes by a rock star, three years before his pal Harry Nilsson's *A Little Touch Of Schmilsson In The Night*). But where Ringo blusters his way through a ukulele-led singalong, McCartney provides a stately, almost funereal version that revives the rarely heard minor-key introduction.

On some songs, like "Home (When Shadows Fall)" and "It's Only A Paper Moon", an old-lady croak creeps into McCartney's higher register. Even this can be devastatingly effective, no more so than on a slow, poignant version of Frank Loesser's "More I Cannot Wish You". In the musical *Guys And Dolls*, it's sung by an elderly uncle giving advice to his young niece. As a billionaire with a young daughter, you can see why McCartney was able to wrench such

PAUL McCARTNEY
KISSES ON THE BOTTOM

CRITICS' VERDICT

"It ought to be the hoariest old lug of clichés, stuffed with every one from the retro Shure microphone to the black and white shot of Paul in a tuxedo. But it's not, for a number of very decent reasons... in a genre mostly attempted from lazy despair, this album is made with care, love and expertise, and it shows on every song."
DAVID QUANTICK, UNCUT, MARCH 2012

"Yes, that title is more than a bit embarrassing, and, of course it drifts into cheese quite often, but only those with a heart made out of steel would not raise a smile at some point during this sentimental journey through the American classics (plus a couple of his own in that style) that taught him the ropes all those years ago."
HAMISH MACBAIN, NME, FEBRUARY 4, 2012

emotion from lyrics like "*I could wish you mansions/Seven footmen all in red... but more I cannot wish you/Than to wish you find your love*" ("That's what totally did my head in," says McCartney, welling up as he talks about it. "Looking at my eight-year-old daughter, thinking about those lyrics. It's very poignant"). Likewise another Loesser song, "The Inch Worm", is sung as a lullaby, with McCartney's voice as comforting as mother's milk, his frailties put into relief by a children's choir who provide the countermelody.

It's an expensive jazz band, and one gets the impression that they've all checked their egos in at the studio door, ready to play tastefully and unobtrusively at less than half of their capacity throughout. It's a bit like hiring Rembrandt to paint your hallway, and you sometimes long for the band members to break cover and display their serious jazz chops. There are hints of suppressed virtuosity throughout: double bassist John Clayton provides a dancing, chordal intro for "The Glory Of Love", navigating the length of his fingerboard; guitarist John Pizzarelli drags his (then) 86-year-old father Bucky out of retirement to play charming ragtime duets on "It's Only A Paper Moon" and "We Three (My Echo, My Shadow And Me)", while Krall's purring solo on "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive" threatens to get a bit tasty.

It's a tribute to McCartney's songcraft that the two originals here could be easily confused for old standards. "My Valentine" is a minor-key ballad with a wonderfully supple acoustic guitar line from Eric Clapton, and a melody with those rising Yiddish cadences that sound instantly familiar. The final track, "Only Our Hearts", is a pretty, rangy ballad that's recorded with a completely different lineup to every other track on the album, and features a spritely harmonica solo from Stevie Wonder. It bears more than a passing resemblance to the Mellin & Wood standard made famous by Frank Sinatra, "My One And Only Love" (a track he also tackles on the *Complete Kisses* album, which dredges up four more studio cuts and 13 live versions).

Kisses... did surprisingly well, hitting No 3 in the UK and No 5 in the US. It charted high around the world, shifting around a quarter of a million units in the States alone (even outselling the apparently more commercial *New*). Impressive stats for a rock album; in the cottage industry of jazz they are almost unprecedented. But, as a love letter to his new wife Nancy Shevell, and as a tribute to his late father, it's an even more valuable piece of work for McCartney.

TRACKMARKS KISSES ON THE BOTTOM

1 I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter ★★★
2 Home (When Shadows Fall) ★★★
3 It's Only A Paper Moon ★★
4 More I Cannot Wish You ★★★★
5 The Glory Of Love ★★★
6 We Three (My Echo, My Shadow And Me) ★★
7 Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive ★★★★
8 My Valentine ★★★★
9 Always ★★
10 My Very Good Friend The Milkman ★★★
11 Bye Bye Blackbird ★★★
12 Get Yourself Another Fool ★★★
13 The Inch Worm ★★★
14 Only Our Hearts ★★★

Label: Hear Music/MPL/Universal/Industry Green
Produced by: Tommy LiPuma
Recorded at: Capitol Studios, Los Angeles and Avatar Studios, New York; strings overdubbed at Abbey Road, London
Personnel: Paul McCartney (vocals, whistling, some guitar), Diana Krall (piano, MD), Karriem Riggins, Jeff Hamilton (drums), Robert Hurst, John Clayton, Christian McBride (double bass), John Pizzarelli, Bucky Pizzarelli, Anthony Wilson, Eric Clapton, Joe Walsh (guitars), Mike Mainieri (vibraphone), Andy Stein (violin), Ira Nepus (trombone), Johnny Mandel (string arrangements)
Highest chart position: UK 3; US 5

RELEASE DATE
OCTOBER 14
2013

PAUL McCARTNEY

NEW

A defiant charge into the eighth decade: *"They can't take it from me if they try!"*

BY MICHAEL BONNER

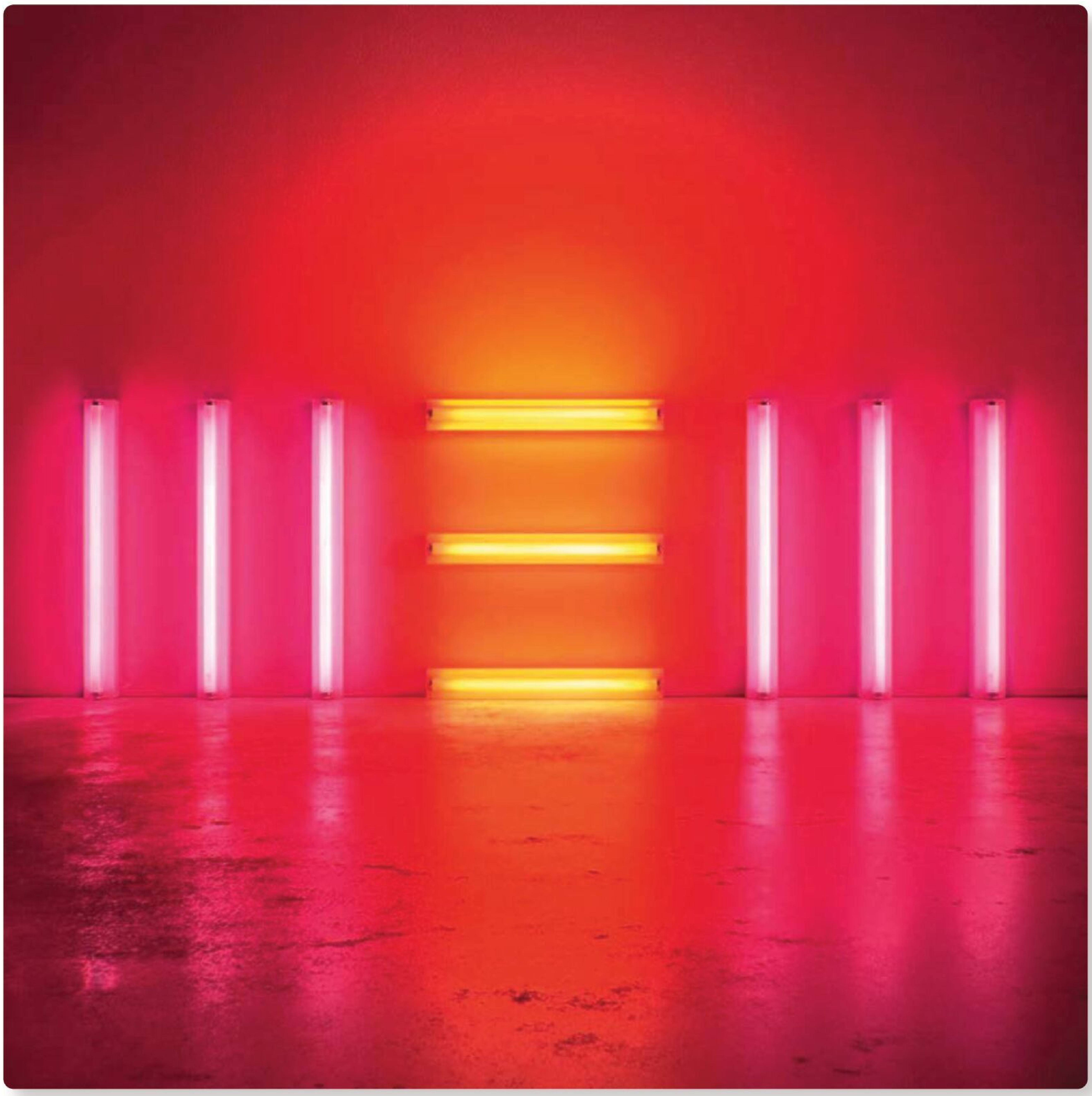
WHEN PAUL McCARTNEY appeared on *The Graham Norton Show* in October 2013 to promote *New*, he was the subject of a rather flattering parlour game. The host asked his other guests – Katy Perry and James Cordon – to guess how many No 1 singles McCartney had played on during his career. It transpired that the correct answer was 24; in all, Norton claimed, McCartney had spent 98 weeks at the top of the charts. As you'd expect, much hearty applause followed.

Paul McCartney has been famous on an inconceivable scale longer than almost anyone alive. Understandably, his relationship with his past is complicated. Even when promoting his 16th solo studio album – with its impression of forward-looking momentum, perhaps even rebirth – it was accompanied by a reflexive nod to his splendid history. This ongoing push me-pull you with his legacy was clearly evident on *New*, released four months after McCartney's 71st birthday. The title itself appeared to be an emphatic – almost neurotic – statement of intent. Perhaps providing further evidence of his willingness to press ahead, he took on four younger producers: Paul Epworth (who produced three tracks), Mark Ronson (two), Ethan Johns (two) and George Martin's son, Giles (six), who also acts as executive producer.

The choice of producers suggested a desire for a contemporary touch; a corrective, perhaps, after McCartney's trawl through the Great American Songbook on *Kisses On The Bottom*. But for all its indications to the contrary, *New* doesn't really stray too far from McCartney's established narrative. Both Johns and Martin have intergenerational connections to McCartney. Elsewhere, in his sleeve notes for *New*, McCartney reveals he was concerned that by using four producers the recordings might not fit together, until he realised "the tracks of Beatle albums were often extremely different from each other and that worked OK!" As the album progresses, you realise that looking back is a recurring theme of *New*. The opening track, "Save Us", presents a forward-looking agenda. New wave-ish guitar riffs and propulsive piano chords play out against Epworth's tight, energetic production – The Strokes' "Reptilia" is a good reference point. "Alligator", meanwhile, finds McCartney flexing his musical chops. He (and producer Mark Ronson) artfully deploy an army of instruments – glockenspiel, celeste, guitars and keyboards among them – to add depth and texture to the song, while McCartney nimbly stretches through a number of exciting melodic shifts and tempo changes. But much as Macca wants to give himself over to new ideas, it's not too long before the urge to become, well, McCartneyesque manifests itself. "On My Way To Work" is the first track here to specifically reference the past – an early job of McCartney's as a lorry driver's mate – and it proves to be among the least musically adventurous songs on the album. Introduced by Wurlitzer chords, "Queenie Eye" is based on a children's chant learned during his formative years in Liverpool; its doggerel rhymes and chunky, churning momentum recall "I Am The Walrus".

> *NEW* FEELS LIKE McCARTNEY PUSHING HIMSELF – A LAUDABLE ACHIEVEMENT

The Johns-produced "Early Days" is the LP's most interesting and least typical song. On first listen, it appears to be a folky strum, with Macca reminiscing about walking the streets of Liverpool with Lennon, *"two guitars across our*



CRITICS' VERDICT

“Giles Martin’s guiding hand allows *New* to follow the path pioneered under his father’s supervision by *Revolver*, *Sgt Pepper* and ‘The White Album’, with each song treated as an individual entity and allocated its own musical resources…”

RICHARD WILLIAMS
UNCUT, NOVEMBER 2013

“Happily, *New* avoids becoming another thumbs-akimbo entry into the Groovy Uncle Paul canon; instead, it’s his most enjoyable record in years… *New* is the sound of an old dog having fun with some old tricks.”

BARRY NICOLSON, NME, OCT 12, 2013

backs”. But on closer inspection, it reveals itself to be something more than just pleasing, misty-eyed rumination. One criticism it is possible to level at McCartney’s latterday career is that he has not found a creative voice with which to reflect on his own mortality. But here, unadorned by effects or production, he actually sounds all of his 71 years: his voice is papery, cracked and alarmingly vulnerable.

The lyrics, too, find McCartney adopting an unexpectedly tetchy position towards his legacy: *“They can’t take it from me if they try,”* he begins, then later: *“Now everybody seems to have their own opinion/Who did this and who did that/But as for me I don’t see/How they can remember when they weren’t there”.* There are few people whose lives have been so rigorously codified, documented and reappraised as his: it just seems strange that it’s taken him this long to get pissed off about it. *Thumbs down, Macca!*

The title track itself, overseen by Ronson, does a brisk and agreeable trade in Beatles vibes. The breezy falsetto chorus of *“oooh”’s*, harpsichord plonks and frisky tempo are straight from The Great McCartney Songbook (“Penny Lane” Edition). All it lacks is a piccolo trumpet. As if realising he has dwelt sufficiently in 1967 – at least for the time being – “Appreciate” sees McCartney and Giles Martin pushing forward with satisfying results. Built around elegant looping and layering, hazy psych washes and drum samples, it feels a bit like The Beta Band.

On the other hand, “Everybody Out There” is a generic, Mumfordy stomp. “Hosanna”, which finds McCartney accompanied by Ethan Johns on an iPad Tanpura app, is carried on waves of droning tape loops: you might wonder what *New* would have sounded like had Johns produced the whole record. Giles Martin, for his part, ushers in the album’s final act with the Wings-y “I Can Bet” and “Looking At Her”, which finds a way to marry McCartney’s sonic aspirations with his more conventional musical tendencies. The album closes with “The Road”, a drifty piece played out in minor piano chords. But there is a hidden track, “Scared”: a graceful, unembellished piano ballad that occupies the ground between the personal and universal familiar from many of McCartney’s best songs.

New, then, isn’t so much about rebooting the McCartney brand, more about placing his traditional skills in a contemporary setting. If it suffers from anything, it’s the number of producers involved. Taken as a complete piece, the album feels like an awkward meeting of different and not entirely compatible enterprises. Epworth’s taut, post-punk sound, for instance, does not sit naturally next to Ronson’s retro-modern pastichery or Johns’ woody folk. But at its best – “Save Us”, “Alligator”, and especially “Early Days” – *New* feels like McCartney pushing himself – a laudable achievement for the artist as he enters his eighth decade.

TRACKMARKS NEW

1 Save Us ★★★★
2 Alligator ★★★
3 On My Way To Work ★★★
4 Queenie Eye ★★★★
5 Early Days ★★★★
6 New ★★★
7 Appreciate ★★★★
8 Everybody Out There ★★
9 Hosanna ★★★★
10 I Can Bet ★★★
11 Looking At Her ★★★
12 Road ★★★
13 Scared ★★★

Label: Virgin EMI Records
Produced by: Paul Epworth, Mark Ronson, Giles Martin, Ethan Johns
Recorded at: Wolf Tone, Air, London; Henson Recording Studios, LA; Hog Hill Mill, Sussex; Avatar Studios, NYC; Abbey Road, London
Personnel includes: Paul McCartney (vocals, guitar, bass, glockenspiel, celeste, synth, cigar box guitar, piano, drums, lap steel, moog, Mellotron, tambourine, upright bass, harmonium, Wurlitzer, congas, maracas, bouzouki with pencil, tape loops, perc), Rusty Anderson (guitar), Brian Ray (guitar), Paul “Wix” Wickens (guitar, piano, accordion), Toby Pitman (programming)
Highest chart position: UK 3; US 3

"The Beatles? A great band, while it lasted"

Machine guns in the bushes. The genius of George Martin. "Late blooming" George Harrison. "Allen fucking Klein" and how he learned to "block the shit". In this 2015 interview, Paul McCartney gives it straight to ***MICHAEL BONNER*** about his partnership with John Lennon and his creative life beyond it…

© MARY McCARTNEY

McCartney in the studio, 1984

TAKEN FROM
UNCUT
10/2015

"I'M TERRIBLE ON history," Paul McCartney admits conspiratorially. "I am! What makes it even worse is that people know my history way better than I'm ever going to know it. I'm not paying that much attention." In the first-floor office above his Sussex recording studio, Paul McCartney is gamely attempting to distance himself from the weight of his legend. But despite McCartney's protestations that he isn't quite up to speed with his own inimitable McCartneyness, there is evidence of his past everywhere around us. Awards line the shelves; framed discs hang from the walls; bags bulging with CDs and DVDs are shoved into corners. It is McCartney's life measured out in memorabilia. At one end of the room sits his wooden school desk from the Liverpool Institute For Boys, where he and George Harrison were pupils during the mid-'50s. Propped up in the corner next to it is an upright bass with white trim around its edges. McCartney walks briskly over to it. "It belonged to Bill Black, Elvis' bass player," he explains, crouching down to run a finger along four letters – B - I - L - L – that have been fixed next to the tailpiece. "Linda bought it for me for my birthday. This is his bass, man. That is the thing."

Do you ever use it?

"I do use it, yeah," he nods. "I use it occasionally. But I'm not good on that. I'm better on…" McCartney pauses.

The conventional bass?

"That *is* the conventional bass," he laughs. "You mean the devilish, modern, electric bass."

Today, McCartney meets *Uncut* wearing a pale blue polo shirt, navy trousers and a pair of light brown casual shoe/trainer hybrids. His hair is a nutty brown colour, while his skin has the light tan of the well-heeled international traveller. His voice is a little husky, the Scouse accent more pronounced than you might expect.

It is a busy period for McCartney – he has only been back in the UK for a few days and tomorrow he flies to the States to play Lollapalooza. To make best use of his limited time, McCartney's day here at Hog Mill Hill studios is taken up with meetings to discuss various projects – archival and new, solo as well as Beatles. A few hours earlier, *Uncut* had arrived by train in nearby Rye. Walking up the town's cobbled High Street, we bumped into Mary McCartney, who reassured us that, despite his active schedule, "Dad is in a good mood today."

The journey from Rye to Hog Mill Hill in Icklesham takes around 10 minutes by car. The route passes signs advertising target sports, summer fêtes and marker posts for the 1066 Country Walk. At Winchelsea, we skirt by the churchyard of St Thomas the Martyr, where Spike Milligan is buried. Take a sharp turn off a winding country lane and Hog Mill Hill appears suddenly on the skyline. The body of the mill is painted black, while a weather-beaten red telephone box stands incongruously beside it. McCartney – who lives a 25-minute drive away, in Peasmarsh – converted the mill into a rehearsal space shortly after he bought the property, but it's currently empty save for a dusty-looking mandolin sitting forlornly on top of a pile of cardboard boxes. A few yards along from the mill – past McCartney's maroon-coloured Lexus – is the studio itself, housed in a two-storey white building. In the kitchen, John Hammel – McCartney's long-serving right-hand man – sits at a table sifting through receipts from the latest leg of the Out There Tour. When McCartney finally appears, he apologises for running late and, as we walk upstairs to his office, he talks enthusiastically about recent live shows at London's O2 Arena in May and at the Roskilde festival.

McCartney's office runs the length of the building's top floor. Two cheery yellow sofas sit on a red rug in the middle of the room. Walking over to the window, he points to a beach where, he explains, he was out walking one day when he first saw the mill in the distance. What first caught his eye, he explains as he ushers *Uncut* towards one of the sofas, was how remote and hard to reach the mill seemed.

This was 1981. No wonder he wanted to get away from it all – the new decade had started badly for McCartney. Within the first 16 months, he suffered a series of heavy upsets. He was jailed in Japan for possession of marijuana, *McCartney II* received a

EVERETT COLLECTION INC / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

polarising response, Wings broke up, and John Lennon was murdered in New York.

After Lennon's death, he didn't tour for eight years. *Tug Of War*, the album he released in April 1982, contained a moving tribute to Lennon, "Here Today"; as a whole, the album found McCartney defiantly confident in his songwriting abilities. Working with George Martin for the first time since 1973, McCartney's sessions for *Tug Of War* and its sister album, *Pipes Of Peace* (both re-released this October), yielded gleaming pop gems, warmly sentimental ballads, a plea for social equality, and even a Christmas hit.

Among the many guest musicians invited to attend the sessions (at Martin's AIR studios in London and later Montserrat) were Ringo Starr, childhood hero Carl Perkins, American jazz fusioneer Stanley Clarke, 10cc's Eric Stewart and Stevie Wonder. *Tug Of War* signalled a new start for McCartney. He had no intention of ever forming a band again, and the album essentially launched his career as a bona fide solo artist. "It was the first time I had a chance to do an *album* album, on my own," he explains. "Rather than just *McCartney I* or *McCartney II*, which were slightly more experimental. This was the first one I got into with George Martin, so I think that probably made it feel like the first proper album. But there's no such thing as 'proper' in my head. If it works, it's proper."

UNCUT: On *Tug Of War*, you were reunited with George Martin for the first time since 1973. What made you want to work with him again?

McCARTNEY: He's just the best. I'd always admired him and loved what we'd done together with The Beatles. I felt a bit sorry for him. It wasn't why I worked with him. Incidentally, I felt a bit sorry for him. He got slagged off. John was in one of his 'hate the world' periods. He said some very bitter things about George Martin that I know he later withdrew. So in a way George wasn't getting the credit that he deserved. But he had really done an awful lot with us. He was brilliant to work with. He was the grown-up in the room. We would all be the naughty little kids. When he would go out, we'd even try and sneak a take in. "We can do it without you!" It was all that, you know. When The Beatles broke up, he got the short end of the stick. But we all knew he was the best. I used to say he had a great bedside manner. He was very clever, like a doctor when you're ill. They have a way of not getting you angry. "Sure, let me just take your temperature." George was like that. I'd disagree with one of his ideas, and they were often very good ideas, and instead of having a barney about it, he'd say, "Maybe we could just try it and if you don't like it, we'll lose it." Then I'd go, "Oh, OK." He was clever that way. He'd get you to try things.

Do you have a specific example?

"Please Please Me". Originally, we brought it to him as a very slow Orbison-esque ballad. [*Mimics Orbison*] "*Last night I said these words… Come on – doodoo – come on – doodoo…*" But George said, "It might be good a bit faster." We'd reply, "No." But he'd persuade us. "Oh, go on then, we'll try it." So we did. [*Starts singing*] "*Last night I said…*" He said, "There's your first No 1." So that, and a million times more, that happened, that thing. I just knew he was very good. If you were going to do an album, he'll give you good strong decisions; he'll put it together well. You're going to get a great sound quality. He's a swot like that. He's good at maths. He would know why something wasn't working. Whereas I'd say, "It doesn't sound good," he'd say, "It's overloading because we put too much bass there and we need to just do this." So that was one of the reasons I wanted to work with him again. And I like him is the other. That's probably the biggest reason.

You were working on the album that became *Tug Of War* when John was killed. When was the last time you saw him?

Good question. When he went with May Pang. I saw him and May at their apartment, which was quite nice, actually. He'd mellowed out quite a bit. He was being himself more. Then I saw him – among the last times – when he was out in LA doing Nilsson's album [*Pussy Cats*] and they were all crazy. I'd been sent by Yoko to be a go-between and to give John a message from her. Which was, "If you go back to New York and court her again, she might accept you." So he did that. Birth of Sean, I saw him. I think that's after *Pussy Cats*. The last time would have been in New York – as he didn't come out of New York – at his apartment, the Dakota. I always think of *Rosemary's Baby*. It was round the time ➔

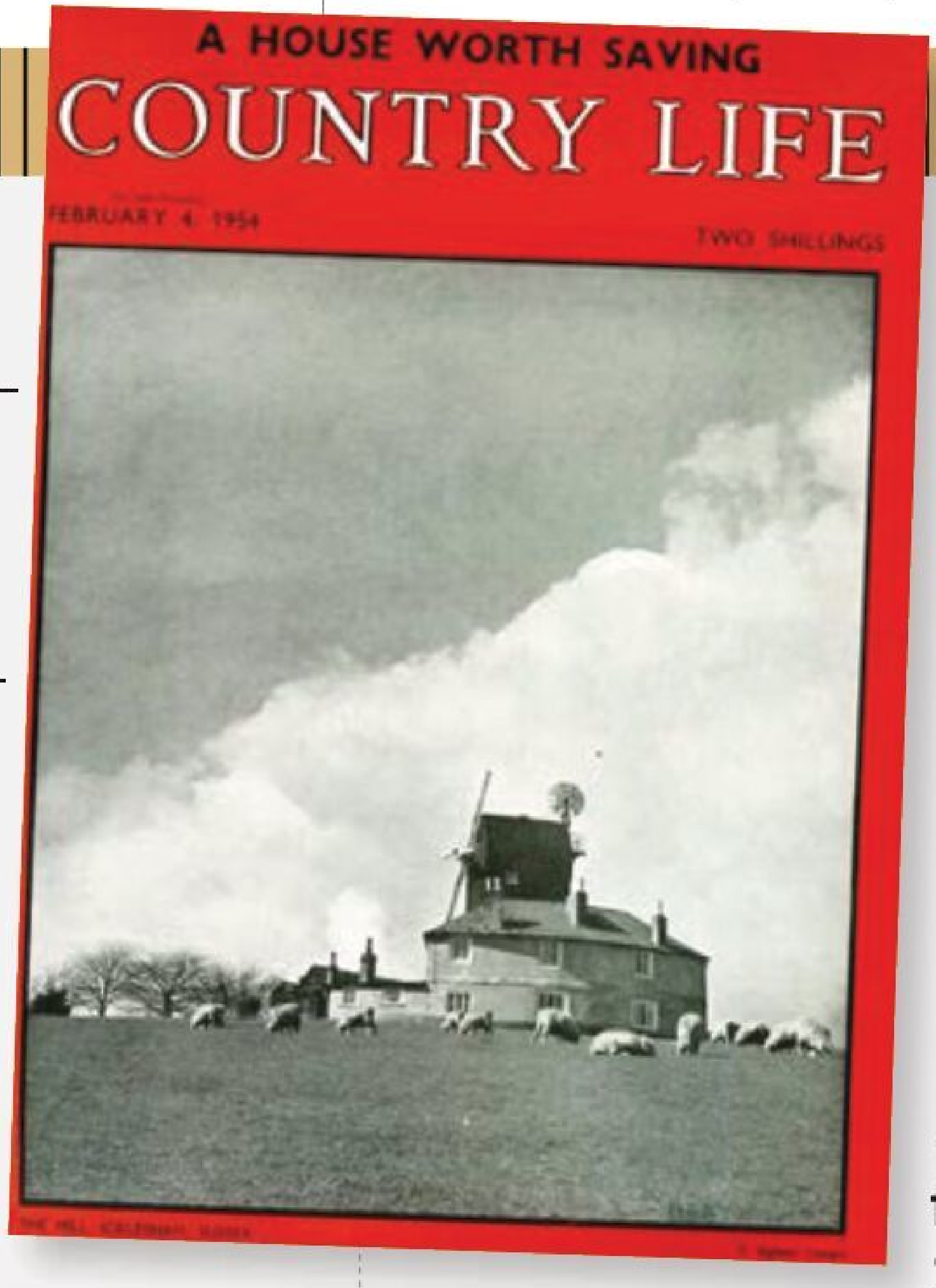
Macca's windmill studio, near Rye

ADAM BIGG / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

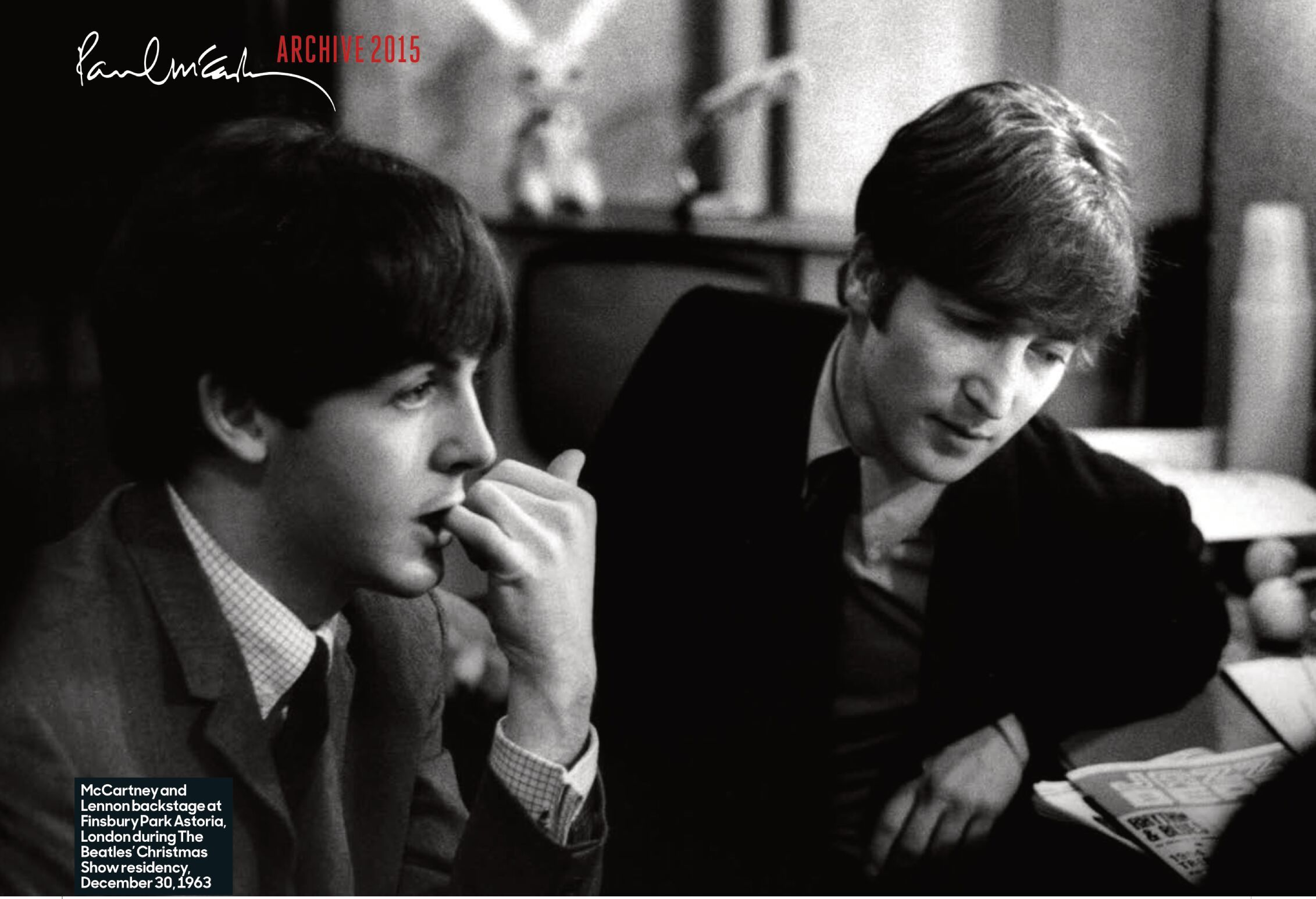
"GEORGE MARTIN WASN'T GETTING THE CREDIT HE DESERVED"

JAM ON!

The secrets of Sir Paul's long shelf-life…



THE KITCHEN AT Hog Mill Hill offers some fascinating titbits for the ardent Macca spotter. On the wall just inside the door is a framed poster for McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio. A small shelf stacked with books hangs behind the door. There are volumes of vegetarian recipes – including several by Linda – mixed in with *The Oxford Book Of Ballads*, *Shamanism And The Mystery Lines*, *The Social Biology Of Ants*, two large box files marked "Studio Manuals" and a well-thumbed copy of *Without You: The Tragic Story Of Badfinger*. Perched on the edge of the shelf, a PG Tips monkey faces out into the kitchen. Two identical magnets are attached to the door of a fridge – both bearing the familiar image of the studio's owner. A window in the centre of the furthest wall looks out to sea, while to its right hangs a framed cover of *Country Life* from February 4, 1954 featuring a black-and-white photo of the mill below the inscription "A house worth saving". To the left, another shelf hosts jars of jam, Marmite, Branston pickle and organic peanut butter. The most eye-catching item, though, is a Lennon calendar hanging on the wall; the image for 'July' showing Paul's former bandmate during his August, 1972 Madison Square Garden show.



McCartney and Lennon backstage at Finsbury Park Astoria, London during The Beatles' Christmas Show residency, December 30, 1963

TERRY O'NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

that we got the offer to appear on *Saturday Night Live*. Lorne Michaels came on television holding up a cheque for $2,000, or something. He really had gone to the NBC people and said, "I want this group." They said, "You can pay them scale." I was in John's apartment.

Where were you when you heard that he'd been shot?
I was in my house about 20 minutes away from here. I got a call off my then manager. He said, "I've got some terrible news." "Oh, what?" It was the ultimate shocker. It was like Linda. "I've got some terrible news." I had to make a decision whether I'd go into work or not. I had a session booked with The Chieftains. Part of me said, "No." But in answer to that it was, "Well, you're going to be sitting here all day, then. Are you sure you want that? Out in the countryside, quite isolated?" I thought, "Wouldn't it be better to be with George Martin and go in and try and do something?" Obviously, we were going to be thinking about John all day, but you're always advised to work through your grief. So I did. I went in and recorded with them. Then I came out and was still in shock. I didn't want to see any paparazzi, but they were there. There was a guy with a mic. He said, "What do you think of John…" We were driving past, so it wasn't like I was standing doing a big interview. I just couldn't think of anything. I said, "It's a drag." And I meant, "*An unholy fucking bastard worst drag ever.*" But the words that came out – "It's a drag" – sounded so casual. It certainly didn't sum up what I was feeling. Anyway, there you go. Too bad. That's what happened. Then I came home and just cried. I watched the news to try to find out some more details and saw pundits coming on and doing what people had wanted me to do. Which was to be sensible about his death and what a tragedy it was duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh and he was a great man and duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh. But I couldn't. I couldn't get any of that together. In fact, I rather despised the pundits who did. I can't blame them now, but they were old friends or casual acquaintances and they'd been hauled in to say something. Yeah, but it was a hell of a shock for months at least, on an immediate level, and then there were all sorts of repercussions and stuff.

Like what?
Everyone I knew suddenly got armies of security. You'd hear, "Sylvester Stallone's got six guys now." Everyone figured if it could happen to John, it could happen to them. It was weird because in the days that followed it, I was sitting in the house. We had a little perimeter fence, mainly to keep foxes out, because we had some chickens. I'm aware of security threats, so I'm on high alert and I look out and I see someone with a fucking gun, like a machine gun, an assault rifle – "Wha?!" He's in full military gear, and then I see there's a whole patrol of them. I'm going, "Holy shit, what's going on?!" I don't know what I did. I think I rang the police. It turned out to be army manoeuvres. "Oh, sorry. Are these your woods?" I'd put two and two together and made a thousand. God, I don't know how I lived through it. You think you'd just faint dead on the ground. But they were all there, coming through these woods.

You appeared on "All Those Years Ago", George's tribute to John. But did you think that people expected you to write a song about John?
If you're not stupid, that does cross your mind. The same thing happened after Linda died. I thought, 'I just want to make the greatest…' But you're not always capable of responding to that stimulus. I don't know why. Maybe it's too big a thing to deliver. I was probably waiting to see if something came, but I couldn't just sit down and write a response song. Funnily enough, "Here Today" was written on this spot. When I first got this building, this used to be a series of little rooms, which I cleared out to make this big office. There was a little room here and I came up, just checking it out. I sat on the bare floor – probably exactly here, it was this end of the room. The bareness of the room was very conducive to focusing my thoughts. I had nothing to look at. So I remember just getting the idea of, 'If you were here today in this very bare room, what would we

"I'M ON HIGH ALERT AND I LOOK OUT AND I SEE SOMEONE WITH A GUN"

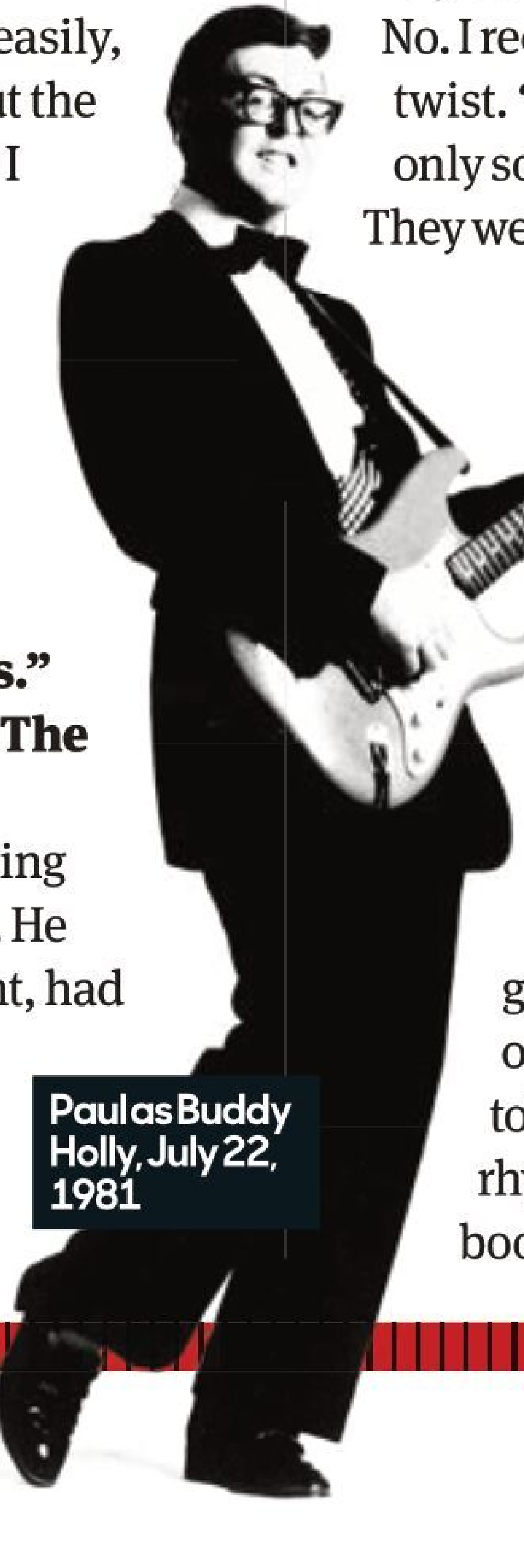
say, what would we talk about, what would you do?' I announce it in shows as a conversation we never got to have. Which, to some degree, is true. Though it's a song, not a psychiatric report. There's one bit that I kinda disagree with when I sing it. *"And you said, I really knew you well what would your answer be?/Well knowing you, you'd probably laugh and say that we were worlds apart"*. He wouldn't have said "We were worlds apart." But anyway. It works in the song.

The song specifically references your early relationship with John. Was that how you tended to think about him in the aftermath of his death, as the young man you first knew?

I think so. Often when you think about anyone, you go back to your formative years. They are core memories, your big movies. On my last album I wrote a song, "Early Days" – *"There's the two of us dressed in black from head to toe..."* – because I've got those images burned into my brain. The other thing is, some of the times in the years before he died were painful, particularly around the breakup of The Beatles. Like anyone – sometimes unwittingly, sometimes wittingly – I block the shit. I don't particularly want to stay with it and wallow in it. So even now when I think of John I often think of us writing together. "A Day In The Life". Stuff like that. "... Mr Kite!". Whatever. Actually, I was just shown the old original scribbled manuscripted lyrics for "I've Got A Feeling" [*McCartney is referring to his previous meeting that day*]. On my side it's, *"I've got a feeling, feeling deep inside/Oh yeah."* His lyrics are to the side of mine. *"Everybody had a hard time, everybody had a wet dream"*. Those moments are the most precious for me. I can go to the others easily, if I'm required to, if we're talking about the shit. Fucking Allen Klein, all that. But I prefer to stay with the good stuff. So "Here Today" and songs like that hark back to the better memories.

Talking about those early days, Carl Perkins plays on "Get It". You once said, "If there were no Carl Perkins, there would be no Beatles." How important was he in shaping The Beatles' early sound?

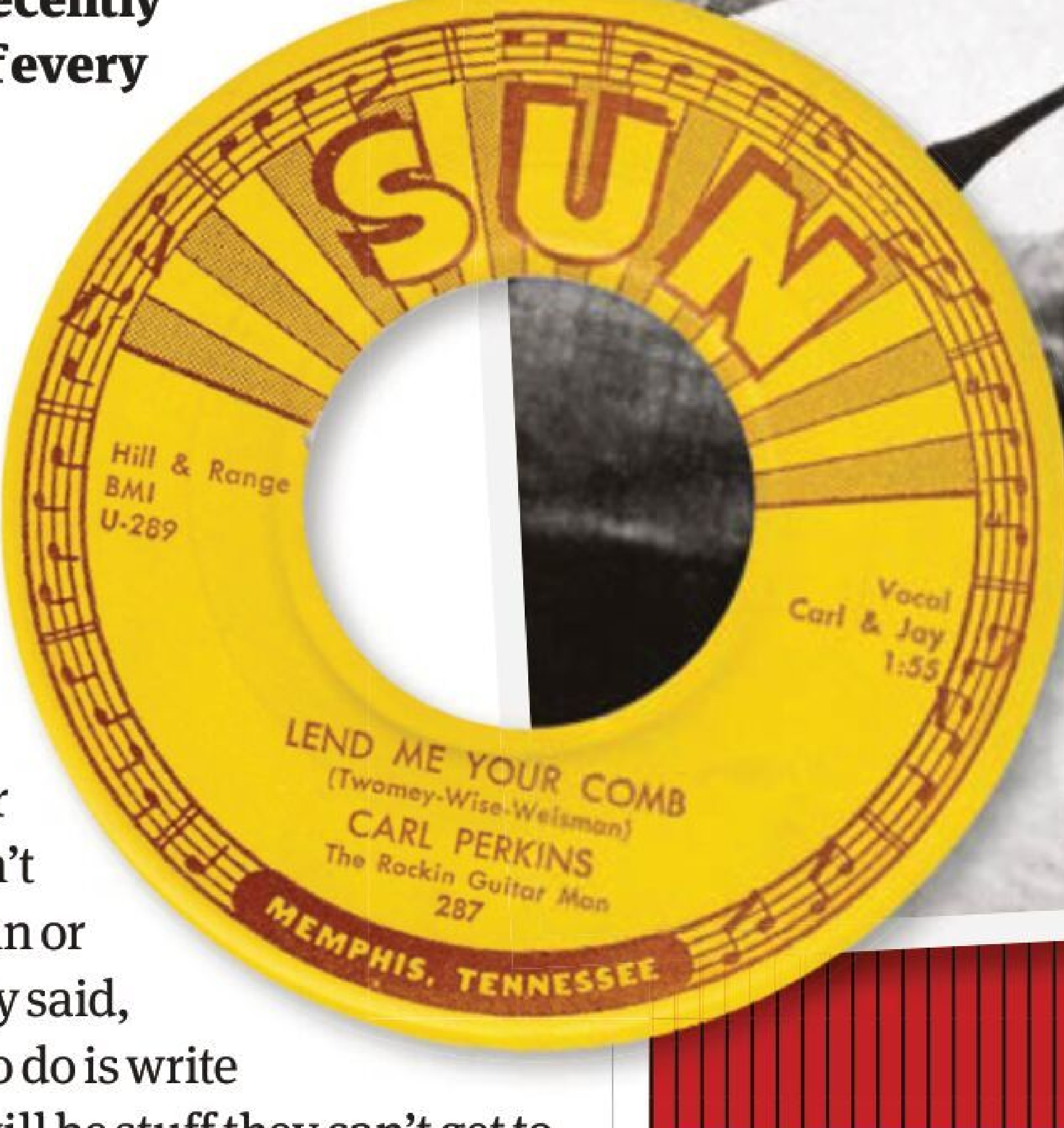
There were a few people in the beginning who were really influential, like Elvis. He was great, good-looking, sang brilliant, had brilliant songs. "Heartbreak Hotel", "Don't Be Cruel", "All Shook Up". Then you had people like Jerry Lee Lewis. Buddy Holly was a very big influence because he wrote and sang his own stuff, which is what we were doing. And he played his own solos. So it gave us clues. When we do it, we'll play a guitar ourselves, not have a guitarist, and we'll stand with a mic-stand. We'll do the solos, we'll sing the songs and we'll write them. When you think about it, that's all The Beatles did. That was the revolution. Even the Stones and those guys didn't do that. We took all that from Buddy, really. There was a secondary group, and the top man was Carl, just because his stuff was brilliant. He'd written "Blue Suede Shoes". That interfaced with Elvis, as well. We loved Carl.



Paul as Buddy Holly, July 22, 1981

His songs were staples of your early sets. Ringo told me recently that the repertoire of every band in Liverpool in 1961, '62 was the same.

We were all turned on to the same stuff. There were a certain amount of records people had and heard and those were all the songs we did, because we were basically cover bands. In the end, I don't know if it was me or John or the both of us, suddenly said, "The thing you've got to do is write some songs, and that will be stuff they can't get to. So we won't hear them singing it just as we're waiting backstage to go on." The other trouble was, even though we introduced "Twist And Shout" and "If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody", the other bands would nick it off us. They'd cover our covers. So there was no way out of it, unless you wrote your own songs. I like that, it demystifies the Lennon/McCartney thing. Instead of "The great muse descended upon us", it was more like necessity. We had to write songs. It was pretty lame at first. I wrote one called "The Pinwheel Twist", which was pretty bad.



Do you remember how it went?

No. I recall fireworks, the pinwheel and the twist. *"Doing the pinwheel twist"*. Those were only so the other bands couldn't access them. They weren't good songs. So Carl was a huge influence. There were strange little things that we really loved about Carl. We thought he was being really quite raunchy in one of his songs, "Lend Me Your Comb". [*sings*] *"Lend me your comb/It's time to go home/I gotta confess/My hair is a mess"*. Anyway, a little later, he sings, *"Sugar bugga it's getting' late"*. We thought it was 'b-u-g-g-e-r'. "Sugar bugger! Fucking hell, this is our hero!" Later, when we met him, he told us it was sugar bugga. It's alliteration, rhyme. Bugga wooga. Sugga bugga, boogie... it was harmless, anyway. But

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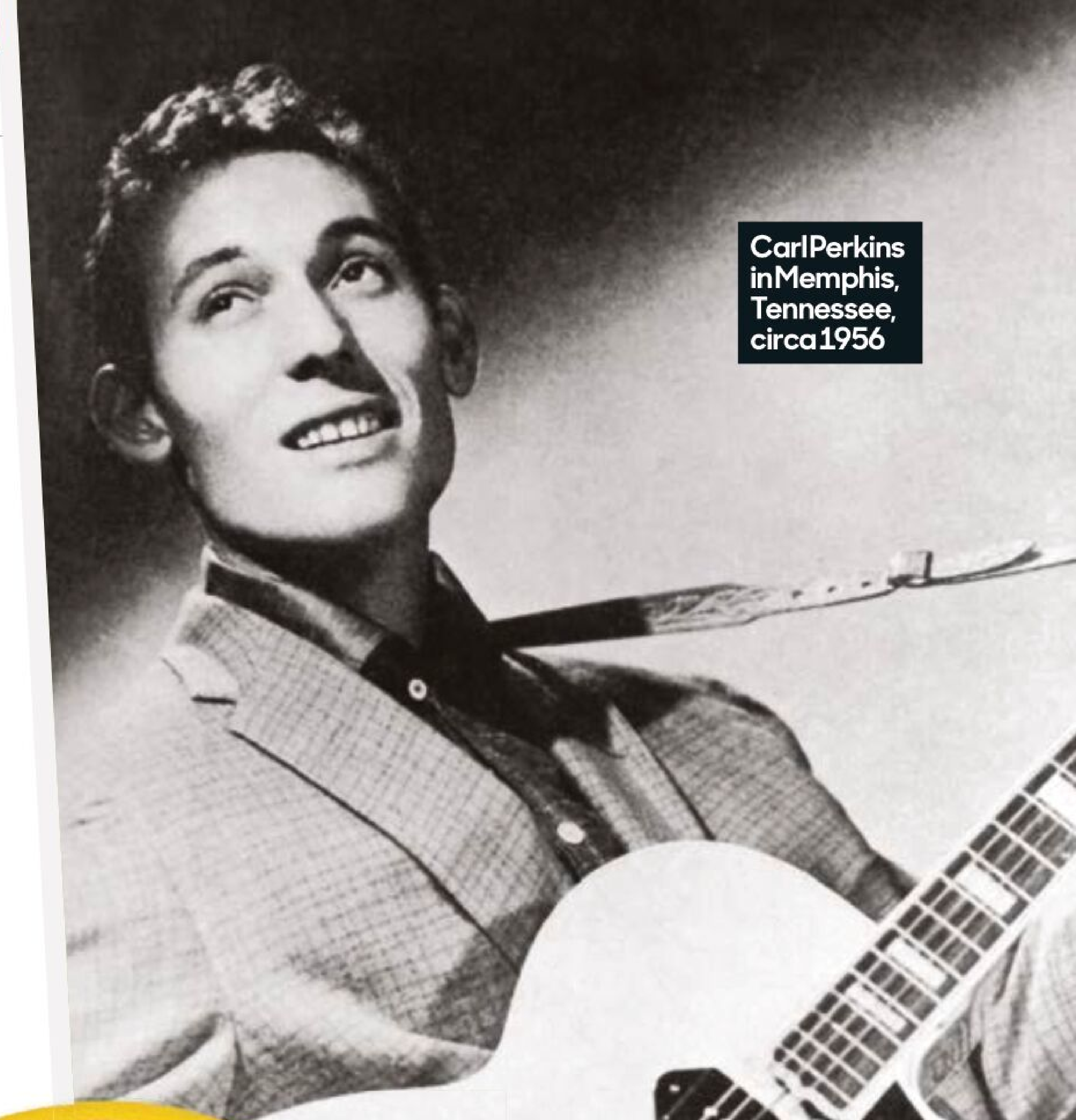


Carl Perkins in Memphis, Tennessee, circa 1956

McCARTNEY ON THE ORIGINS OF "AVERAGE PERSON"

"WHEN I was growing up, there was a tradition in the music hall to have a stage act with a song that involved various people. "If I Were Not Upon The Stage", I think it's called. It appealed to me as a kid. '*If I were not upon the stage, someone else I'd like to be/If I were not upon the stage, a window cleaner me/You'd see me all day long singing out this song/Running up ladders, running up ladders...*' And that'd be one person's song. Then another person would come on. '*If I were not upon the stage, someone else I'd like to be/If I were not upon the stage, a midwife I would be/Delivering babies, delivering babies...*' And that '*delivering babies*' fitted with the first guy's '*running up ladders*'. It was a craft song, which is what "Average Person" is supposed to be. It was like a music hall thing. In the end, you've got five people all doing mimes and bits of songs. Then at the end, as everyone was so busy, there'd just be someone, '*If I were not upon the stage/An opera singer me/La la la la*', so that fitted with '*running up ladders*'. Musically, it all fitted."

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

we thought it was red hot because of that. So silly little teenage things attracted us to him. But he was great. We did a lot of his songs. "Matchbox", "Honey, Don't!", "Lend Me Your Comb".

Was getting Carl Perkins to play on the *Tug Of War* album after John's death an attempt to reconnect with a simpler, more innocent time?

It probably was, yeah. That's always the case with things like that. I never remember my exact thinking but, for instance, round about the time it was to get away to record somewhere, because a lot of people were doing that. I'd already done it. We'd done *Band On The Run* in Lagos. *Tug Of War* in... London? What am I talking about? No, Montserrat. Montserrat and London. That was one of the things: where will I go to record it? Montserrat. That'll be great, with George. Then the next thing is: who will I record it with? I'd written "Ebony And Ivory". I knew I wanted to sing this with a black guy who I admired, so Stevie was the obvious choice. Then it was: Who else? Oh, Carl Perkins. It was what you were saying. He was brilliant, from our youth. He's still good.

Ringo's on it, too.

Ringo, yeah.

You were in the studio with Ringo and George Martin two months after John's death. Did that overshadow the recording sessions?

It was all a bit healing around that time. It was, "Let's try to do an album I like, try to have some fun doing it." So, the people involved were a large part of that. And, yeah, reconnecting. There's Carl with my rock'n'-roll past. There's Ringo with my Beatles past. I rang him up and said, "Do you fancy doing it?" "Yeah, OK."

You worked on Ringo's *Stop And Smell The Roses* album around that time, didn't you?

He asked me to write a song or two for it. They weren't very successful. I wish that I'd written a better song for him. You can't always do it. But anyway, we had a laugh. We went down to Super Bear in the South Of France to do it. He was in a particularly crazy, stimulant-laden time and he had decided he wanted to do this song called "You Can't Fight Lightning". It goes on for about 15 minutes. The lyrics are, *"You can't fight lightning"*. It was something to do with freebasing. Lightning, lighting, drugs. So anyway, that was that. It was just a trifle boring, that take. But I didn't have the guts to say, "We should fix this up."

"Average Person" is another of your story songs, like "Eleanor Rigby" and "Penny Lane". What prompted you to start writing that kind of song in the first place?

I think a lot of them, besides "Eleanor Rigby", tend to be comedy. It's me doing the tongue-in-cheek thing, whereas "Eleanor Rigby" was more serious. I think that's why it was more successful. I've still got a few that I haven't released because I don't think they're that good. It's quite a fun thing to do, to just dream up a name of a character and just try and write the story of that character and then make it fit with another character. "Eleanor Rigby", I did it with Father McKenzie and Eleanor. With some of these, I try and make too many fit. They're not always the most successful.

"ME AND JOHN COMPETED WITH EACH OTHER TO WRITE"

You recorded two tracks on *Tug Of War* with Stevie Wonder. Did you ever feel in friendly competition with Motown in the '60s?

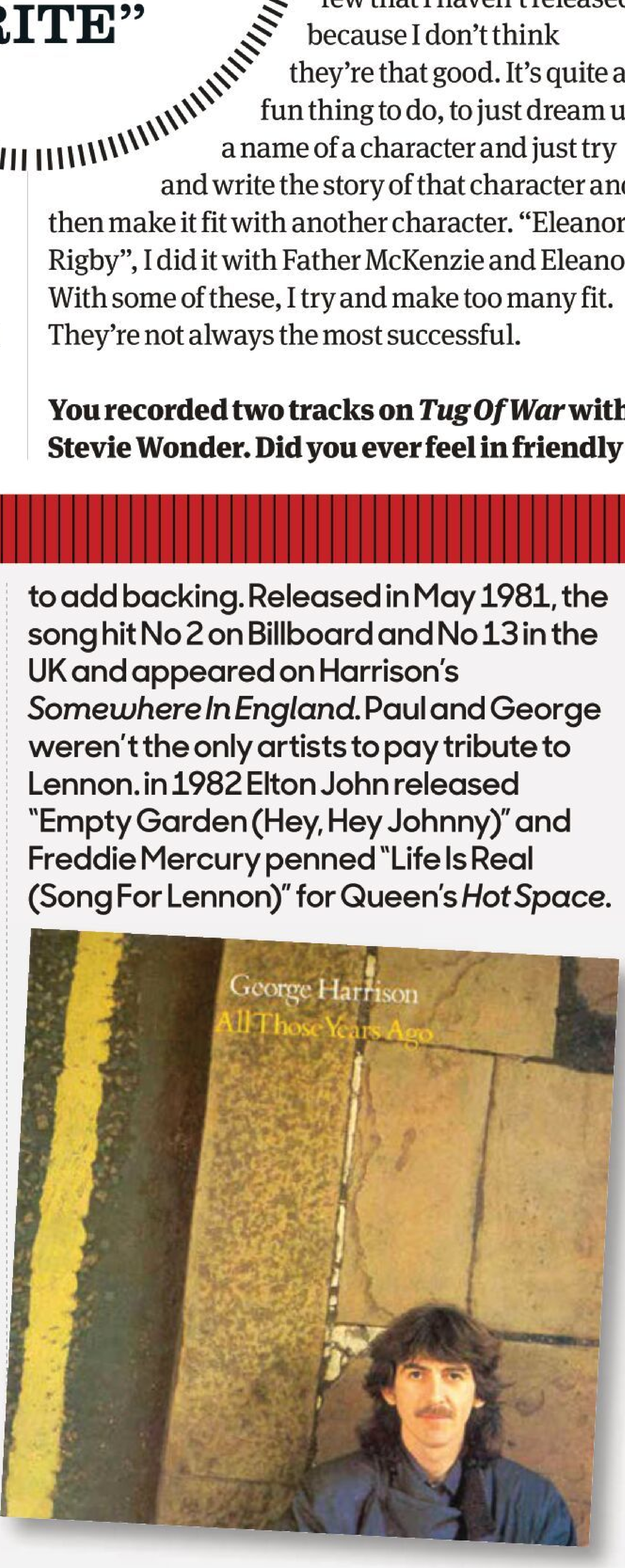
More admiration, really. I remember us all getting "Fingertips". "What? This kid's 13? I can't believe it!" It was a very hot period for him. But really, you could say I'm in competition with everyone because you're trying to get in the charts. That sounds like a very big statement, that. But it is true, really. It may apply to you. There are a lot of journalists out there and you would like, presumably, to be better than them all and get the Pulitzer Prize. Having said that, though, that doesn't govern what you do. I think with Stevie, Carl, Stanley Clarke and Ringo on this album, it's more admiration, really. But if we were in the charts together, I'd rather do better. I have a competitive instinct. The great thing about me and John writing together was we competed with each other, which was very healthy. "Fucking hell, he's just written 'Strawberry Fields', I better write 'Penny Lane'."

Shake, rattle and roll: Stevie Wonder and McCartney recording *Tug Of War*

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

"NOW WE'RE LEFT COLD AND SAD..."

PAUL McCARTNEY wasn't the only ex-Beatle to record a tribute to John Lennon following his death. George Harrison was working on a song while Lennon was still alive. He originally wrote "All Those Years Ago" with different lyrics for Ringo to sing. A recording was made at Friar Park in late 1980, although Ringo was unhappy with the result and it was shelved. After Lennon's death, Harrison rewrote the lyrics, including a line to *"the devil's best friend"*: presumably, Lennon's killer, Mark Chapman. Harrison retained the original backing track – with Starr on drums – and overlaid his revised lyrics. He recruited Paul & Linda, and Denny Laine to add backing. Released in May 1981, the song hit No 2 on Billboard and No 13 in the UK and appeared on Harrison's *Somewhere In England*. Paul and George weren't the only artists to pay tribute to Lennon. in 1982 Elton John released "Empty Garden (Hey, Hey Johnny)" and Freddie Mercury penned "Life Is Real (Song For Lennon)" for Queen's *Hot Space*.



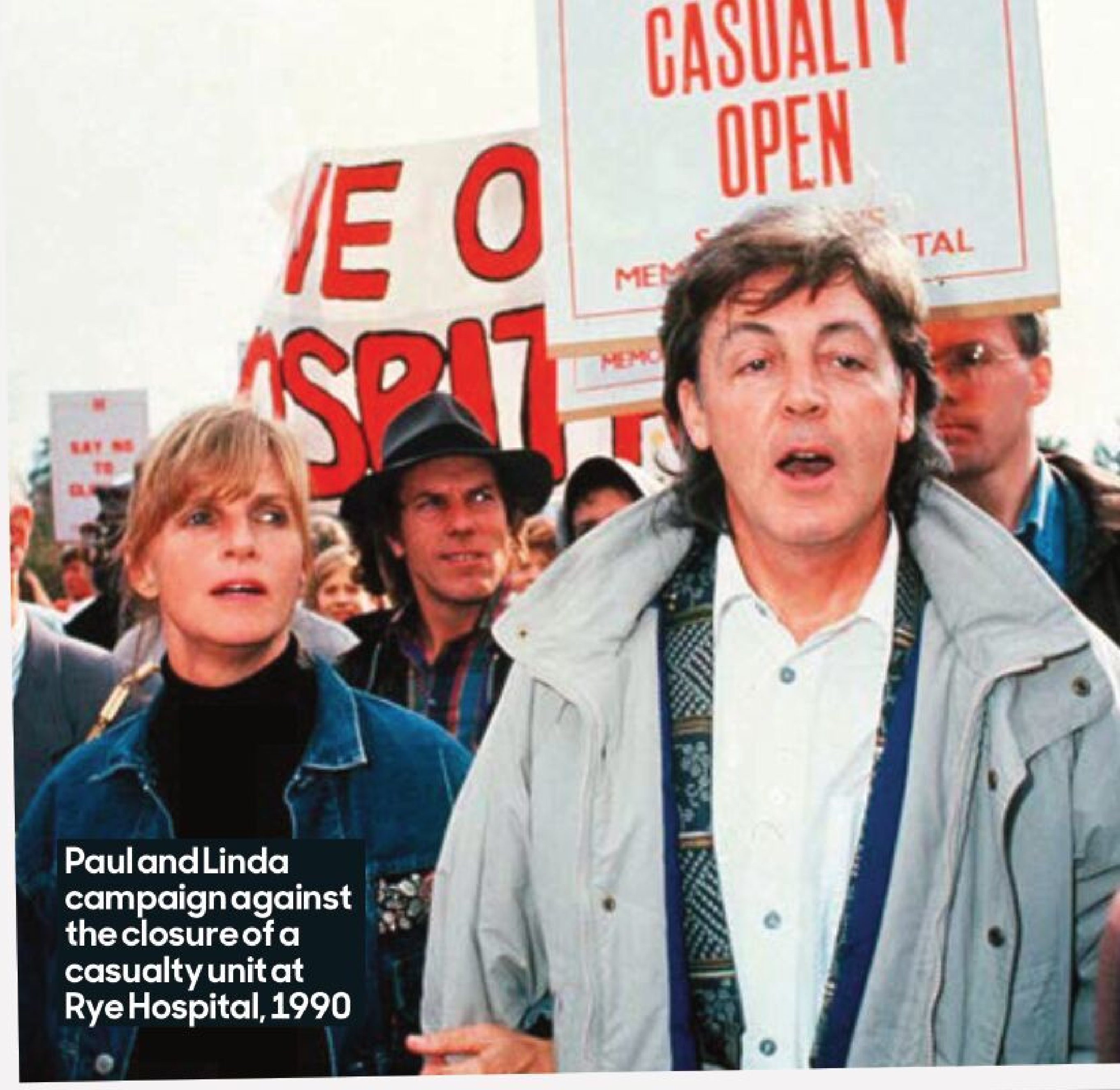
George was no slouch, either.
No, but George was a late bloomer. He didn't really write until later on. Then he really started to come through seriously with his big songs. But it took him a while.

Do you think it was intimidating for him, presenting songs to you and John?
At first, we wrote his songs for him because he didn't write. The story of me and John. I'd written a couple of songs, he'd written a couple of songs. I'd never met anyone who'd written a couple of songs. I'd say to people at a party, just in conversation, school friends, "I've written a couple of songs." They'd go, "Oh, yeah?" That would be the end of it. With John, I said, "I'd written a couple of songs." He went, "So have I." Ding! Light bulbs all round. "Wha? Oh, well. Come on then. Come over to my house. I'll play you mine, you play me yours." That's what started us. So then we were writers. So in The Beatles when we needed anything, we were the writers. We wrote "Do You Want To Know A Secret" for George. We'd write something for Ringo, "I Wanna Be Your Man". We'd write for the other two guys. But then George first of all came up with one called "Don't Bother Me". We thought it was OK. But I suppose we were a bit patronising, as it was good that he'd written one, but it wasn't quite as good as the ones we were writing for him. But he wanted to write and he just got steadily better and better. "If I Needed Someone", "Here Comes The Sun", "Something". He was coming up with serious stuff. "Something" became Frank Sinatra's favourite Lennon & McCartney song. We didn't mind at all, no. It was good to see him progressing. We were chuffed.

There's a lot of cross-pollination on The Beatles' solo albums after the split. Did you keep up with what the others were doing?
Yeah, I think we all listened to each other's records. There was bitterness at the end, and it was three against one, as I'd had to do my thing for us all to get out of Allen Klein's grip. It was successful, but it was very unpopular with them as they thought I was being a big head. For me, I just saw it as, "I'm saving our fortune or this guy's going to run away with it." So I was very focused, knowing that if I saved mine I'd save theirs. Many, many years later, they all acknowledged that. Now you'll get Yoko and Olivia saying, "Wow, good job you did that, Paul." Because they could see the value of it. Beatles going to iTunes wouldn't have happened. It would have been Allen Klein going to iTunes. So consequentially, we didn't really speak to each other much.

Then it got better?
Yeah. Then if I was in New York, I'd ring John. It got better with all of them. I think we all just realised it was a bunch of bullshit. A breakup is like a divorce – very painful. So then we'd see each other. So, yeah, I did listen to their stuff, listened to George's *All Things Must Pass* and everyone's. If I was asked to write a song for Ringo, we all chipped in and wrote something. I'd listen to John's and think, 'Ooh…' That same old competitive thing would come back in. I know it happened with him, 'cos people who were working with him said when he heard "Coming Up", he said, "Oh, shit, Paul's written a good one, I'll have to write a good one." It then forced him to write something good. So, yeah. We were aware of each other's work.

You were all quite insecure towards the end, though?
It's a common artistic fault. I spoke to Lady Gaga the other day. She was talking about self-loathing. I said, "No! I don't want you to say that! You sing like a bitch, you know!" I didn't say that to her, of course; I'm trying to be evocative. "You sing like an angel, you're amazing, you write stuff, you perform. Please don't have any self-loathing." But everyone has it. It's not just artists that have it. But we were going through quite a bit of it at that time. Everyone was insecure, so we needed to bolster each other up, instead of what happened, which was split up. But, you know. A great band, while it lasted.



Paul and Linda campaign against the closure of a casualty unit at Rye Hospital, 1990

FLAMING RYE!

ABOUT FIVE MILES north-east of Hog Mill Hill studios lies Rye. McCartney has a long connection with the medieval town. In 1990, he led a four-year campaign against NHS plans to close Rye Memorial Hospital. "My mother was a nurse," he told *The Independent*. "I've got a lot of time for nurses and doctors 'cos of what I saw her go through. The NHS is something our tax money buys."

Meanwhile, McCartney has often hosted Christmas parties for his staff at The George In Rye, a boutique hotel on the High Street. Across the road, you'll find Grammar School Records, a regular haunt of Mary McCartney during her childhood. Inside, you'll find a copy of *The Hollyridge Strings Play The Beatles Songbook* or *Marching With The Beatles* by the Band Of The Irish Guards alongside less arcane pressings such as *Tug Of War* (£8; G) and *With The Beatles* (£75; VG+).

THEN McCartney looks at his watch. We're some way over our allotted time. "I could talk for ages," he says, tantalisingly. But he has other projects to tend. He walks *Uncut* back downstairs, where he stops by the front door. He chats unhurriedly for another five minutes about seeing U2 play recently at Madison Square Garden, the proposed running time of his Lollapalooza set and the critical rehabilitation of *McCartney II*. He talks enthusiastically about his desire to perform a show where he is unshackled from playing "Hey Jude" and the big hits, and can focus on the lesser-known tracks from his catalogue. As he finally opens the front door to show *Uncut* out, he asks how we're getting back to Rye station. One of his studio staff is kindly providing a lift. He nods, then stops us on the doorstep. "Have you got anything to eat on the journey?" he asks. Without waiting for an answer, he ducks back into the kitchen and returns with some fruit. "Here you go," he says. "A banana and an orange for the train." And then, with a wink, he shuts the front door.

JOHN ENGLAND/REX SHUTTERSTOCK

RELEASE DATE
SEPTEMBER 7
2018

PAUL McCARTNEY

EGYPT STATION

An “album” album – but more of a scenic stopping service than a full blown concept. BY GRAEME THOMSON

GIVEN THE JAUNTY, shamelessly button-pushing preamble to the release of Paul McCartney’s 17th solo studio album – a televised magical mystery tour around key Liverpool haunts in the company of James Corden; hometown gigs at the Philharmonic and Cavern; everything short of piloting a yellow submarine across the Mersey – you might have expected the actual record to be awash with ringing Rickenbacker, supercharged beat music and waggle-headed harmonies.

At 76, McCartney was entitled to trade on old glories, but *Egypt Station* proved to be nothing so obvious. His first album since 2013’s *New* was produced by hitmaker-for-hire Greg Kurstin, with a sole contribution from the similarly clubbable Ryan Tedder. Following on from his recent collaborations with Rihanna and Kanye West, the immediate suspicion was that Macca might have been more concerned with relevance than nostalgia, a theory backed up by the blast of youthful exuberance, even irreverence, of “Come On To Me” and “Fuh You”. The former is just the right kind of dumb. Boasting thuggish drums, rattling piano, sitar solos, cool horns and a melody a toddler could master, it goes for the full “Lady Madonna” vibe. The latter is more contrived, a rather grim pitch for the millennial market that isn’t so much edgy as unseemly.

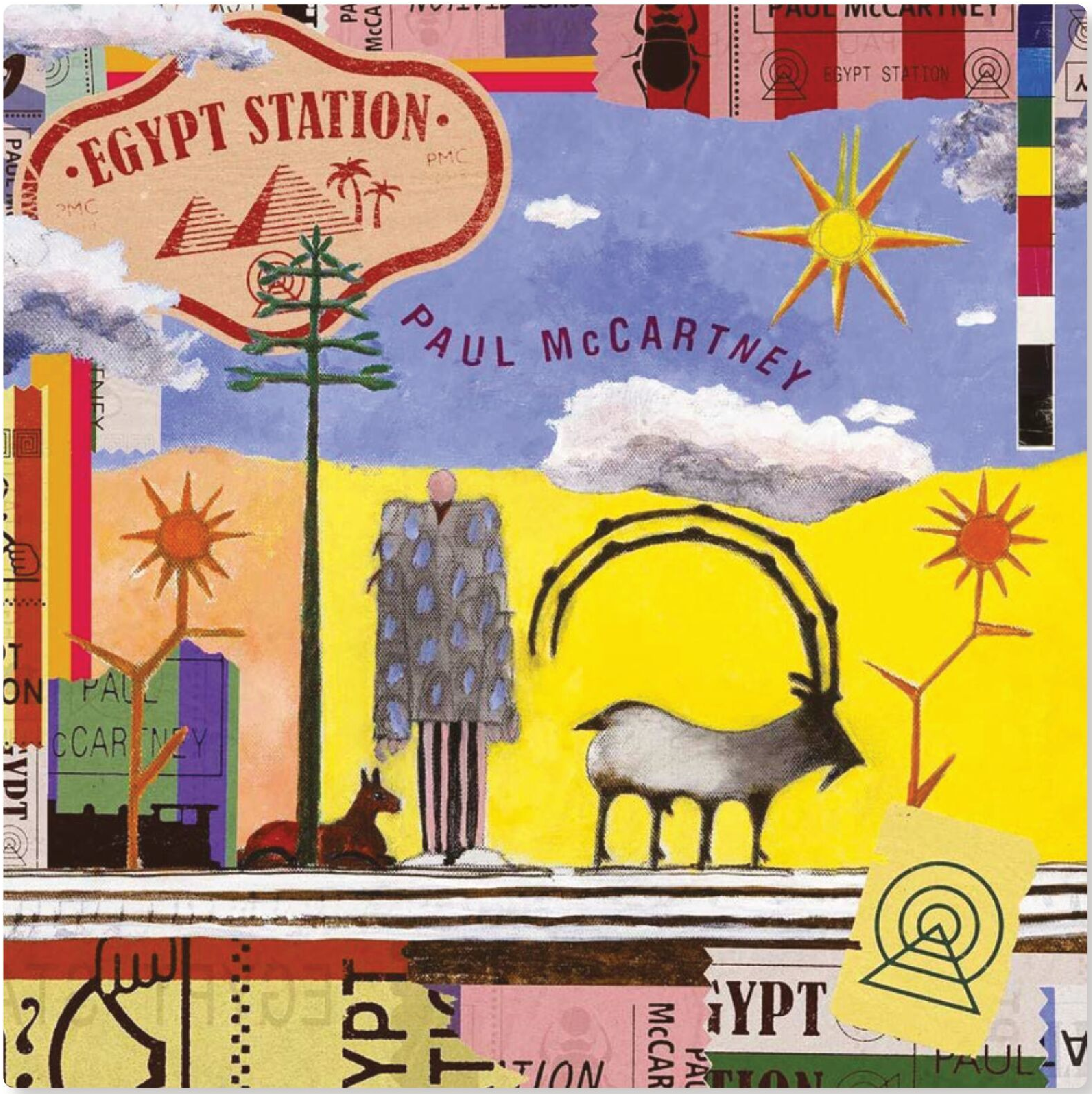
Such is the tightrope between ‘now’ and ‘then’ traversed by *Egypt Station* – an album described during a promotional chat with Jarvis Cocker as “a loose concept”, and on another occasion as an “‘album’ album”. The pre-match puff pitches the album as a “journey”, framed by two brief, ambient instrumentals. If so, it follows a haphazard itinerary in an attempt to cover all bases. There’s pop Macca, rock Macca, experimental Macca, acoustic Macca, funky Macca – and senior Macca.

> IT FOLLOWS A HAPHAZARD ITINERARY IN AN ATTEMPT TO COVER ALL BASES

“Happy With You” might be the first song on which McCartney has truly sounded like the old man he now is. A frugal campfire tune, with echoes of Peter Gabriel’s “Solsbury Hill”, his voice creaks on words that reveal a clenched fist behind the raised thumb. “*I used to get angry*,” he sings. “*I sat around all day/I liked to get stoned/I used to get wasted/But these days I don’t*”.

“Confidante” is even more regretful, a surreal but heartsore tale of busted friendship set to a ragged minor-key folk strum, while the excellent “Do It Now” is a stately valediction (“*I’ll be leaving in the morning, watch me go*”), bent on seizing the day before the shadows fall. It’s one of the few occasions where McCartney and Kurstin bring out the big guns – cascading drums, orchestra, choir and all.

On these reflective songs, redolent of the long road travelled and the far shorter path ahead, the hard weather in his voice works well. That high, bell-like tone may not ring so sweet these days, but McCartney can still raise a serviceable scream when the mood takes him, as it does on “Who Cares”, a low-slung blues boogie powered by greased-up ZZ Top guitars, and “Caesar Rock”, a rousing semi-acoustic funk-rock curio that finds McCartney apparently



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Mostly, *Egypt Station* is a record that's going to delight McCartney's fans and – importantly – Beatles fans who might sniff at some of his solo work. It's not wildly out there, like his work as The Fireman, but nor does it err on the safe side, like 2013's *New*. It's an album of upbeat and winsome notes, and it's simple and honest, as if one of the most famous people in the world has left his diary open for us to read."

DAN STUBBS, NME
SEPTEMBER 7, 2018

auditioning for Spinal Tap vocal duties.

For ballast, there's a handful of tunes that could have appeared on any McCartney album since *Flowers In The Dirt*. On the ropey "People Want Peace" – "*I know that you've heard it before...*" – you can only admire his fealty to this particular theme while acknowledging that it has become a creative boneyard. Opener "I Don't Know" is better, a solid, mid-tempo piano archetype flooded with late-night anxiety. "*Crows at my window, dogs at my door,*" he pines over simple, chunky chords, "*Where am I going wrong?*" "Dominoes" – a favourite pensioners' pastime, lest we forget – offers an embarrassment of melodic hooks, with a rare sunburst of harmonies and some *Revolver*-style backwards guitar on the outro. "Hand In Hand" is a wisp-like beauty, pastoral and fragile, with a superb, serpentine melody.

If these are the album's equivalent of central stations, McCartney ventures further afield on the branch lines. "Back In Brazil" is an eccentric electro bossa nova, surfing a funky clavinet groove and featuring a flute solo that raises the spectre of Ron Burgundy in *Anchorman*. It comes close to pastiche while foregrounding an experimental spirit that reaches full bloom on "Despite Repeated Warnings", a seven-minute multi-part suite on which Macca unburdens himself of his thoughts on Brexit ("*We have been misled... What can we do to stop this foolish plan going through?*") and Trump ("*The captain's crazy... How can we stop him, grab the keys and lock him up?*") via the extended metaphor of a capering quest to stop a mad skipper running his ship aground. Consciously doffing its hat to "Band On The Run", "Live And Let Die" and "Happiness Is A Warm Gun", among others, the music flips from proggy piano plod to chugging rocker, before undertaking further handbrake turns into thrusting orchestral rock and crunchy blues. The last words we hear as the vessel veers towards the rocks is a mocking, "*It's the will of the people!*" It's as inventive as it is endearingly silly. Hidden track "Hunt You Down/Naked/C-Link" evolves from primal rock through warped doo-wop to crying blues in similarly entertaining fashion.

It all adds up to an artist in rude creative health. If none of *Egypt Station* is quite startling enough to shift preconceptions about the most famous musician on the planet, it's sufficiently vibrant to justify its existence, and strong enough to ensure that McCartney can sprinkle three or four tracks into the set on his upcoming world tour without setting off any alarms. Despite the distance travelled, at this late stage, Beatle Paul is still travelling forward, yet to reach his destination.

TRACKMARKS EGYPT STATION

1 Opening Station ★★★
2 I Don't Know ★★★
3 Come On To Me ★★★★
4 Happy With You ★★★★
5 Who Cares ★★★
6 Fuh You ★★
7 Confidante ★★★
8 People Want Peace ★★
9 Hand In Hand ★★★★
10 Dominoes ★★★★
11 Back In Brazil ★★★
12 Do It Now ★★★★
13 Caesar Rock ★★★
14 Despite Repeated Warnings ★★★
15 Station II ★★★
16 Hunt You Down/Naked/C-Link ★★★

Label: Capitol
Produced by: Paul McCartney, Greg Kurstin, Ryan Tedder
Recorded at: Henson Recording Studios, LA; Abbey Road London; Hog Hill Mill, Sussex
Personnel includes: Paul McCartney (all instruments), Greg Kurstin (guitar, Mellotron), Rob Millett (Cimbalom), Wix Wickens (keyboards), Abe Laboriel Jr (drums), Rusty Anderson (guitar), Brian Ray (guitar), Tim Loo (cello), Greg Phillinganes (piano)
Highest chart position: UK 3; US 1

RELEASE DATE
DECEMBER 18
2020

PAUL McCARTNEY

McCARTNEY III

Forty years on from the last one, the third "self-titled" McCartney album brings the rockdown to lockdown.

BY JOHN ROBINSON

MOMENTS OF CRISIS have often been strangely liberating for Paul McCartney's music. When The Beatles were running on vapours, he retrenched and wrote his disarming debut album, *McCartney*. Ten years later, after a pot bust, a cancelled tour and a general weariness with Wings, he broke free to make *McCartney II* in 1980.

These are both great albums and big ones, but they seem to have defined themselves very clearly as a "type" in Macca's mind, and in his canon. Rather than "proper" records (today he uses the word "commercial"), if it's called "McCartney" somewhere then it's in some way something he views as an escape from routine, a sort of skive. Like when movie directors used to say they made one for the studio and one for themselves, these are the records where he is free to be the McCartney he wants rather than the one he thinks people expect him to be.

When the pandemic of 2020 upended the world and upset his scheduled plans for reminding Glastonbury of his genius again, he turned a crisis in the world into another opportunity to step off the treadmill of being Sir Paul and make a McCartney record. Obviously, it conveniently chimed with the 50th anniversary of his life as a solo artist, so you suspect this can't have all been done in quite the off-the-cuff way we've been encouraged to think of it. But the whole thing is loose, strange and has a welcome feeling of experiment.

This is a guy who has a lot to draw on in his home studio – Bill Black's bass, his own classic instruments, world-class equipment, so the idea of this as being a lo-fi adventure was an act of misdirection. But with its cheeky "Recorded in Rockdown" dedication on the sleeve, there was an element of someone pivoting, as we said two years ago, to a new version of their usual proposition.

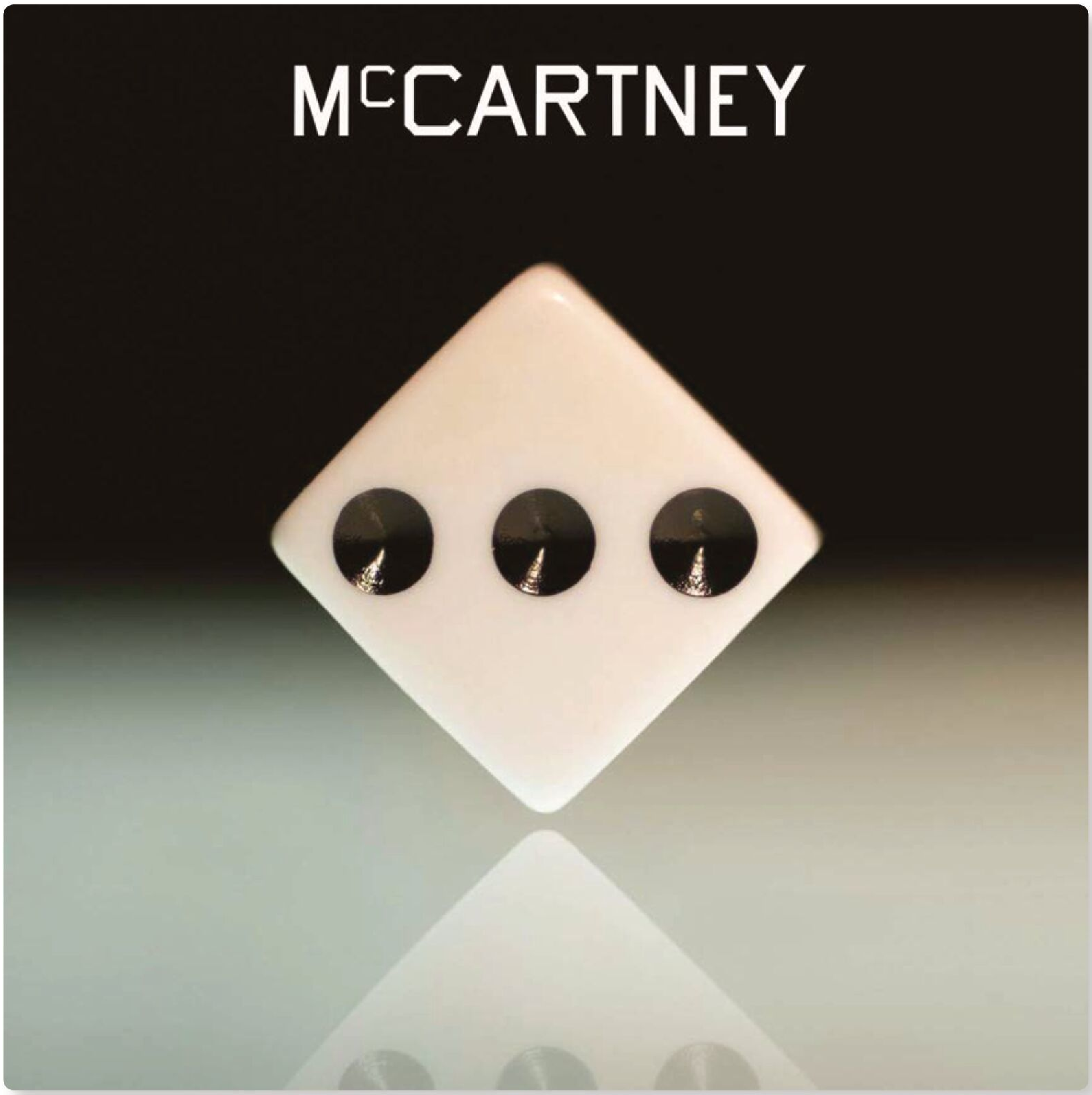
We duly join Sir Paul chopping away at the acoustic guitar on a song called "Long Tailed Winter Bird", working over a Byrdsy, vaguely modal open-string run, then gradually adding layers of Macca to himself: bass, guitar, hypnotic vocals, drums, backwards recorders. If you're the kind of person who likes to think of opening tracks as establishing a mood, then this one sets a tone of the unhurried development of ideas. It also sounds a bit like "Weather With You" by Crowded House, which in the bigger karmic picture of give and take, is probably fair enough.

THERE IS A BASE LEVEL OF INNOVATION AND FUN OFFERED AS STANDARD THROUGHOUT

Ad hoc, anything goes, is the mood of what follows. Much of it (at the very least) is accomplished and playful, and there is a base level of innovation and (especially) fun offered as standard throughout, which isn't guaranteed at this level of seniority. Sixty years of recording will help an artist develop a strong idea of what might make their music interesting, and McCartney has been conscientious about developing his soundworld.

The single "Find My Way", on the surface a demo recalling minor breakbeat popsters the Go! Team, becomes, with stacked harmonies, backwards guitars and an elegant wit ("*We never close/I'm open round the clock...*") a surprisingly sideways look at coping strategies for depression.

That talent for arrangement will carry a person like McCartney through strange minor compositions like "Pretty Boys", which seems to be transcribing a distant memory – bicycles,



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Where *McCartney III* really breaks from the lineage of its eponymous forebears is in its sheer unpredictability. A 'White Album' sort of eclecticism was key to the greatness of 2018's *Egypt Station*, and *McCartney III* is even more chameleonic. 'Deep Deep Feeling' gives way to the monstrous psych metal riffage of 'Slidin'', the sound of the man who wrote 'Helter Skelter' returning to see how his creation has grown; 'Slidin'', in turn, cedes ground to a charmingly vaudevillian falsetto folk ditty called 'The Kiss Of Venus', a kissing cousin of The Beatles' 'Mother Nature's Son'..."

MARK BEAUMONT, NME, DECEMBER 15, 2020

working for the squire, "*You can look but you better not touch*" – down verbatim. The same goes for the not especially impressive cousin of the more famous "Polythene Pam", "Lavatory Lil" – insistent beat, very nice chunky electric guitar playing and amusing backing vocals help its two minutes slip down OK. "Seize The Day" (hook: "*It's still all right to be nice*"), near the end of the album finds him showing Neil Innes, Jeff Lynne and Noel Gallagher how to do a Beatles pastiche if you're planning one – though his originality prevents it from being simply that.

At other times, McCartney simply sits with a traditional instrument (piano on "Women And Wives"; acoustic guitar on "Kiss Of Venus" or "Winter Bird/When Winter Comes") and lets his unique melodic gold tumble out. But the best moments are when McCartney sounds as if he's genuinely pursuing the strangest idea he can, only to bust through the fabric into genuine origination.

A chief case in point might be "Slidin'", which needs more love on Spotify, and fixes up an Arctic Monkeys-style guitar riff with an incredible falsetto tune. It's rowdy and very slinky. The voice is also key to the album's best track, "Deep Deep Feeling". Over minimal beats, McCartney layers vocal riffs on top of each other to build an engrossing freakout – all with a stately Eric Clapton-style guitar solo, too. It's very strange, it's eight minutes long and you can't hum it. "Deep Down" suffers a bit from the professionalism which can add a sheen to minor composition, but notwithstanding the keyboard preset brass and the holding-pattern lyrics, it retains a weird and tuneful vibe which suggests a future as an interpolation in an R&B ballad.

Something of the pervading lack of preciousness attends the 2021 sister album, *McCartney III Imagined*, in which a cast of famous, moderately edgy pals have a crack at the material. Only Dominic Fike's "The Kiss Of Venus" really untethers and goes somewhere new, though Khruangbin's "Pretty Boys", which casts Macca, sonically speaking, as a disembodied head in a jar, could justifiably turn heads at the Sofia Coppola dub disco. Elsewhere Damon Albarn goes jazz-funk Nico on "Long Tailed Winter Bird", Anderson .Paak's "When Winter Comes" mysteriously and rather wonderfully shaves about 40 years off McCartney's age, and Josh Homme's "Lavatory Lil" resists rocking route one for something restrained and spooky.

It's an interesting enough record, for sure, but remixing himself, playing fast and loose with the source materials, is to be honest something that McCartney was doing on the original album anyway. There's a lot of responsibility that goes along with being Paul McCartney, and no-one knows that better than Paul McCartney. But when he allows himself to forget who he is and just remember what it is that he does, 50 years solo, he can still come up with songs to surprise you. More impressively, maybe even surprise himself.

TRACKMARKS III

1 Long Tailed Winter Bird ★★★★
2 Find My Way ★★★
3 Pretty Boys ★★★
4 Women And Wives ★★★★
5 Lavatory Lil ★★
6 Deep Deep Feeling ★★★★★
7 Slidin' ★★★★★
8 The Kiss Of Venus ★★★★
9 Seize The Day ★★★
10 Deep Down ★★★
11 Winter Bird/When Winter Comes ★★★★

Label: Universal
Produced by: Paul McCartney (plus) Greg Kurstin, George Martin
Recorded At: Hog Hill Farm Studio, Sussex
Personnel: Paul McCartney (all instruments), plus Rusty Anderson and Abe Laboriel Jr (both on "Slidin'")
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 2

“I wish I knew I was Paul McCartney. It would be so much easier…”

Early 2020. As the “new normal” forces Paul McCartney to reconfigure a year without theatre projects and a Glastonbury appearance, the former Beatle’s thoughts turn instead to the many promising song fragments on his phone. Six months later, he presents the unselfconscious, often very far-out *McCartney III*, a sequel to his other albums of a similar name, made in their own kind of self-isolation 50 and 40 years ago. Reflecting on his ongoing communion with John Lennon, on Dylan, The Beatles and their place in the pantheon, Paul reveals for *MICHAEL BONNER* the humility of the man behind the music legend. “I got ambitious and made a kitchen table,” he remembers. “I put everything into that table…”

PORTRAIT BY: **Mary McCartney**

TAKEN FROM
UNCUT
01/2021

IT IS MID-OCTOBER 2020, and Paul McCartney has a lot on his mind. At present, he is considering the serendipity that has presented itself, often at unexpected moments, during his 60-year career. “So much of what I’ve done in my life I didn’t particularly mean to do,” he explains, almost by way of an apology. “When you analyse it, people might say, ‘That’s a clever move!’ But, no, it was really just… luck really, like the music that The Beatles just ended up arbitrarily making. When I write songs, I don’t know where they’re going. I’ve not got it on the GPS, I’ve not got my destination locked in. I’m following the route, just seeing where I end up.”

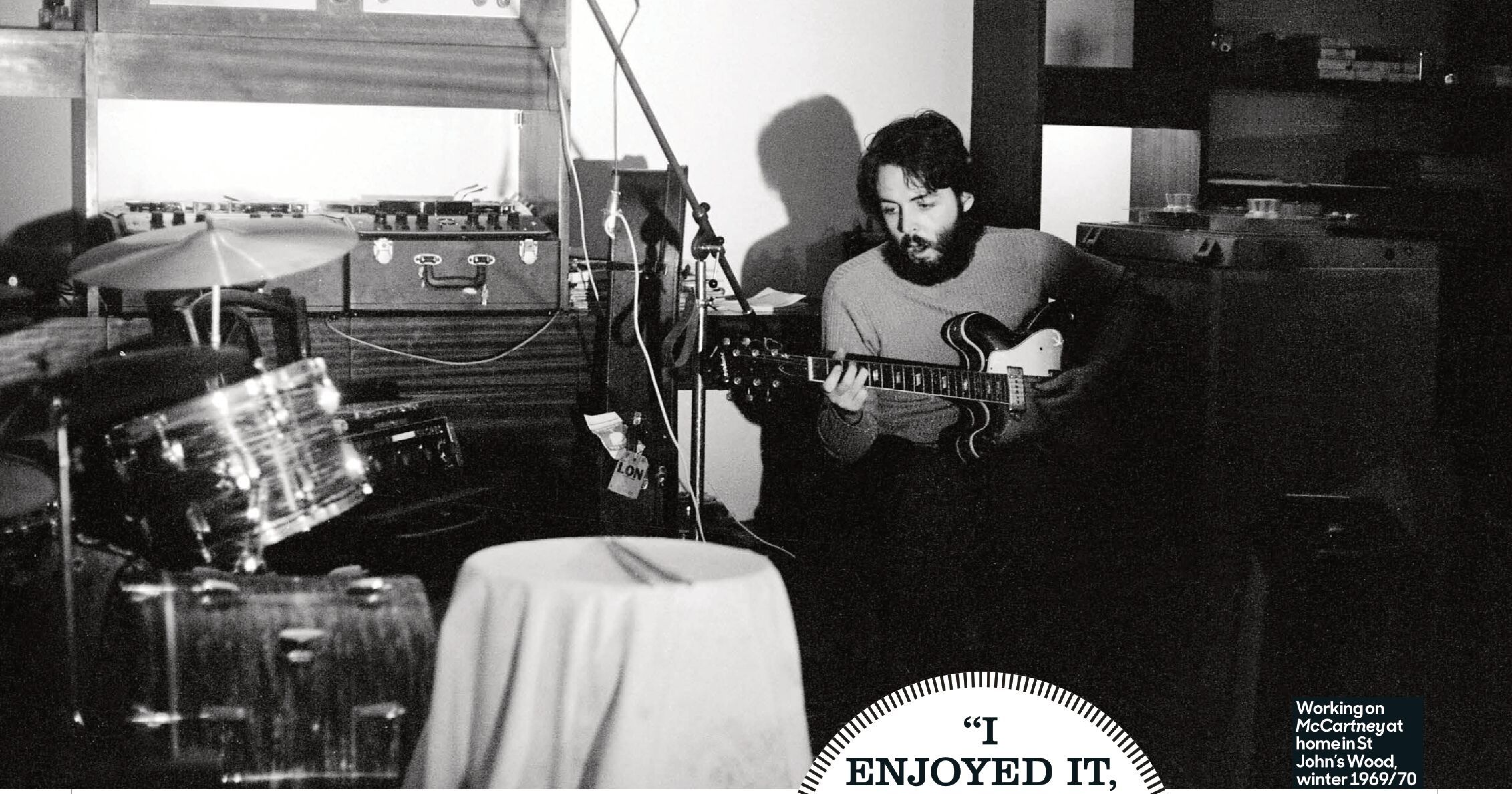
Where, then, has Paul McCartney ended up in late 2020? His original plans for the year – a Glastonbury headline slot, the release of Peter Jackson’s *The Beatles: Get Back* documentary and more – were left in tatters in March, with the advent of the pandemic.

Locked down – in “rockdown”, as he calls it – in his Sussex farmhouse with his eldest daughter Mary and her family, McCartney found himself “pottering around” in his home studio, making new music. The result is his first new album since 2018’s *Egypt Station*. But this latest work isn’t a “posh album”, as McCartney calls one of his usual studio records. Instead, it is a completely unexpected and delightful new album, *McCartney III*, a stripped-back, questing solo work in the tradition of his 1970 solo debut and 1980’s *McCartney II*, places where the artist could set himself free from old ways of doing things.

For McCartney, these inventive albums form part of an experimental creative thread stretching back to “Tomorrow Never Knows”, *Sgt Pepper* and on through his Fireman collaborations with Youth, *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*, the *Liverpool Sound Collage* and beyond. “I’ve always enjoyed grabbing as much freedom as I can,” he insists. “I find freedom creatively very liberating.”

Looking to the future by putting the past in context, McCartney acknowledges the parallels between 1970 and the present day – in both instances, he was self-isolating on a remote farm with his family. Then, of course, he was up in Argyllshire, as far away as possible from London and the collapse of The Beatles. It all seems such a long time ago now, but McCartney bears the weight of his legend with practised ease. He is thrilled, for instance, that one song on *McCartney III* – “When Winter Comes”, dating from 1992 – was originally produced by George Martin, creating a direct link from The Beatles to the present day.

Today, McCartney is in his London home – sitting in the same room where he recorded the



Working on *McCartney* at home in St John's Wood, winter 1969/70

bulk of *McCartney* on a four-track Studer tape machine – just 15 minutes' walk to Abbey Road. The week before this interview, it would have been John Lennon's 80th birthday; two days after *Uncut* speaks to McCartney, it is the 60th anniversary of The Beatles' first ever recording session in Hamburg. Sit still for long enough and another will be along in a minute.

While our chat strays from *McCartney III* to Bob Dylan, The Beach Boys and Elvis Presley and other musical outliers, conversation always seems to circle back to The Beatles.

"Do I mind?" he says with a laugh. "It's like, 'Are you kidding?' That people still talk about us in utterly glowing terms, 50 years later... Wow!"

You are more primed than most for doing a self-sufficient album... With the *McCartney* records, half the time I didn't know I was making an album! On all three of them, the intention was just to make some music around the house. *McCartney III* started with a little bit of instrumental music I had to do for a short animation film a friend of mine, Geoff Dunbar, is making. I've worked with him over the years on various things, like *Rupert And The Frog Song*. I couldn't put that off – they need the music first, before they do the animation – so that gave me an entrée into the studio and I just kept going, finishing songs that I hadn't had time to finish before.

How do you usually feel at this point with a new album? Fine. We do all the worrying up front – I'm always very happy once we've mixed it and signed it off. But this time, I didn't mean to make an album. It was just me messing about. Sometimes if I don't have anything on, I'll go into my studio just to do something. I love it. I'll get on the drums or the synthesiser and play about – sometimes some good stuff comes out of it. But when you're making a commercial album, a proper album – whatever you want to call it – you have bigger concerns. But doing this for my own pleasure took away a lot of the pressure. I was pottering, like I did on *McCartney* and *McCartney II*. I'm a mad professor in his laboratory, experimenting!

You've spent most of your professional life with a schedule of some kind. Was the empty diary liberating? Having a hole in the diary didn't worry me. If you think about it, The Beatles toured a lot, then we stopped touring and made *Sgt Pepper*. So that idea of having all the time in the world to do what you like doing isn't new to me. But while I enjoyed it, at the same time I felt a bit guilty because I know a lot of people are having a very hard time. It's a double-edged sword. You felt sorry for people who don't have freedom, but at the same time you were glad that you do.

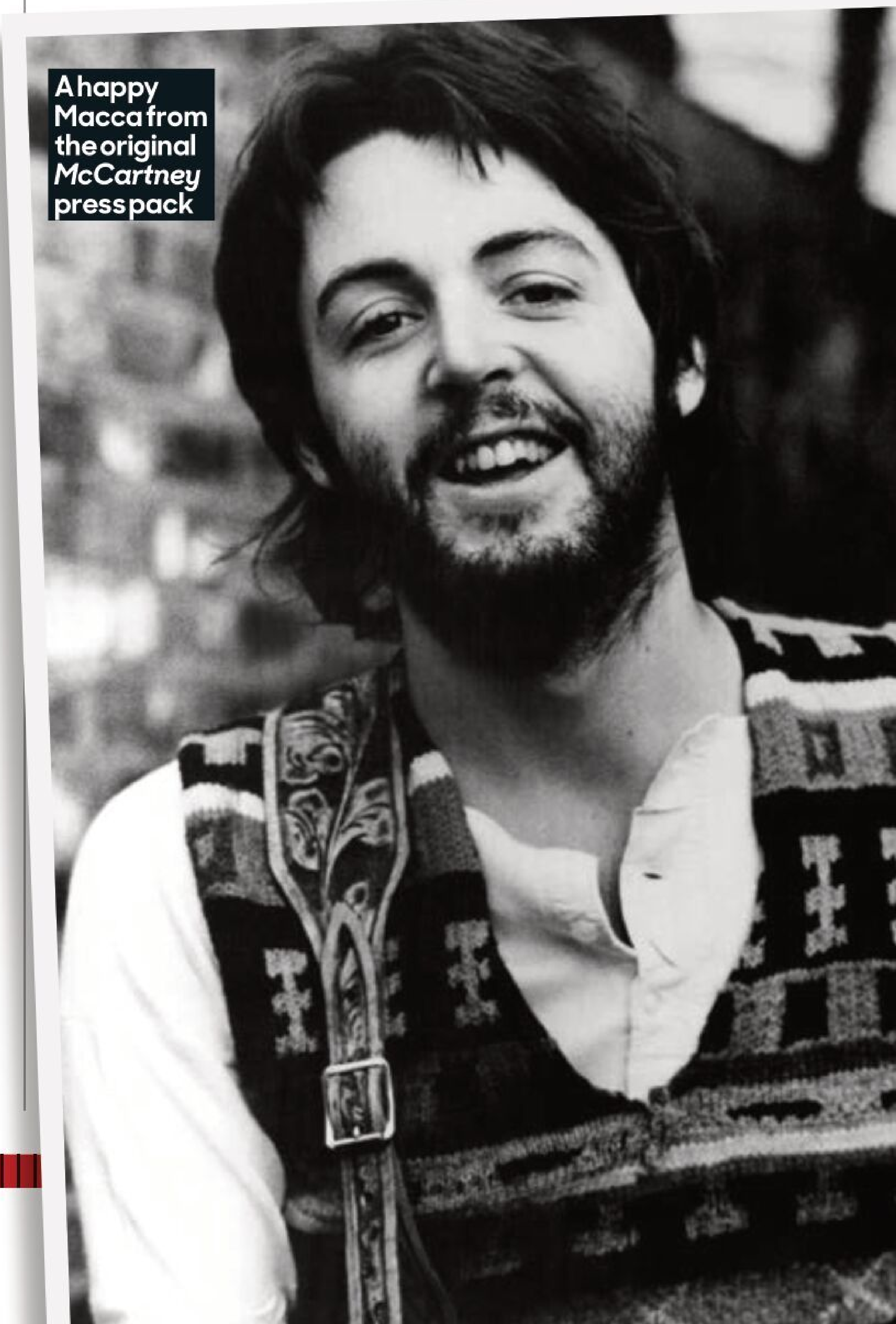
You said some of these songs had been around for a while. Do you often look in the cupboard? The problem with iPhones is that you can have an idea – *"Doo do doo do come on bam bam"* – and you think, 'That's good, I'll finish this later.' Then you realise you've got 2,000 of these ideas on your phone! 'Oh, God! Am I ever going to get round to them?!' So lockdown allowed me to get round to a lot of them. But I do have a list of songs that I started but didn't actually finish or release.

How long is the list? Too long! It's songs I've written on holiday, songs from before Covid where I was in the studio, right after *Egypt Station*, but I didn't need to come up with an album and also songs I liked that got sidelined. I'm working on one at the moment that was going one way, but I didn't like the lyric. "No, this is not happening, mate." This would have been the point where John and I would have said, "You know what, let's have a cup of tea and try and rethink this."

"I ENJOYED IT, BUT FELT GUILTY – A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE HAVING A HARD TIME"

Do you often mentally consult John when you're writing? Yeah, often. We collaborated for so long, I think, 'OK, what would he think of this? What would be say now?' We'd both agree that this new song I'm taking about is going nowhere. So instead of sitting around, we'd destroy it and remake it. I started that process yesterday in the studio. I took the vocal off it and decided to write a new vocal. I think it's heading in a better direction now. Anyway, it keeps me off the streets!

You used some pretty impressive gear on this album, including Bill Black's double bass that he played on "Heartbreak Hotel".



A happy Macca from the original *McCartney* press pack

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That was a gift from Linda, wasn't it? We had quite a few acquaintances in Nashville. One of the guys who we knew happened to know Bill Black's family. He was chatting to Linda and said, "That old bass is just sitting in the barn. Nothing's going to happen with it." I think Linda thought, 'God, talk about a birthday present!' She organised it all and gave it to me. I've been playing it ever since. I can't play it very well because I'm an electric bass guy. But it's a great sound and as long as the part I'm doing is simple, I can manage it.

You've also got an Abbey Road Mellotron! Does that bring back any particular memories? Oh, yeah! We used to go into Abbey Road every day; it was our workplace. One day, in the middle of the studio, there was this… piece of furniture that none of us had ever seen before. It was a kind of wartime grey colour. It wasn't glamorous at all. We said, "What's this?" The engineer started explaining it to us: "It will synthesise strings. You can get flutes and organs and all sorts of stuff." So we became fascinated with it. We used it on a few things, like the intro to "Strawberry Fields". There's a Spanish guitar line on "Bungalow Bill" – that's actually the Mellotron. These days, if you go a bit crazy on it and don't allow it to do its full sample, you end up with a wacky piece of music.

"When Winter Comes" dates from 1992. It's a George Martin production. Nice to have George present, in spirit at least. What springs to mind when you think of him? He was brilliant to work with. He was like a doctor when you're ill. They have a way of not getting you angry. "Sure, let me just take your temperature." George was like that. I'd disagree with one of his ideas, and they were often very good ideas, and instead of having a barney, he'd say, "Maybe we could just try it and if you don't like it, we'll lose it." Then I'd go, "Oh, OK." He was clever that way. He'd get you to try things. "Please, Please Me", originally we brought to him as a very slow Orbison-esque ballad. "*Last night I said these words… Come on – joojoo – come on – joojoo*" – you can imagine Roy Orbison doing it. George said, "It might be good a bit faster." We go, "No." He used this skill of persuasion and he got us. "Oh, go on then, we'll try it." So we did, "*Last night I said…*" He goes, "There's your first No 1."

On one of the songs on *McCartney III*, "Find My Way", you say, "*You never used to be/Afraid of days like these/But now you're overwhelmed/By your anxieties*"… That was written at the beginning of lockdown. It was a very scary time. Other scares we've had – SARS, avian flu – they seemed to happen to other people. But this was happening to everyone, people you knew, everyone in the world. Some of my friends, some people I knew were close to going under with it.

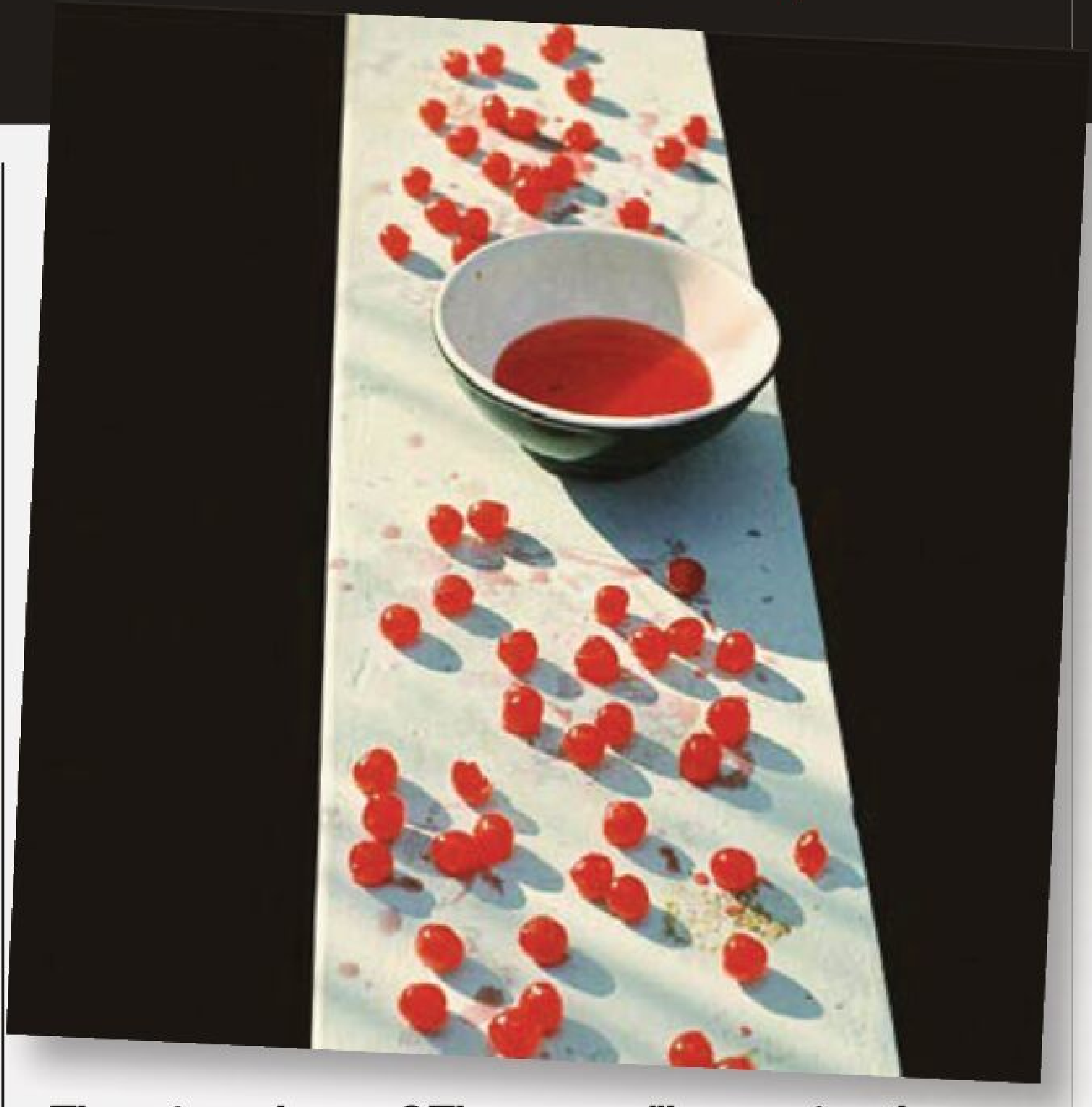
Do you ever think about your responsibilities as a songwriter in times like these? I've always tried to put some kind of positive spin on most things. Then I'll think, 'You know what, that's enough optimism. Let's get weary for a change.' But I know the effect

THE FAB THREE

What makes a Paul McCartney solo album a solo album?

McCARTNEY APPLE, 1970

★★★★★



What? The original solo artefact, taped at Macca's home on Cavendish Avenue in north London, within mildly ironic walking distance of Abbey Road Studios. Domestic recording was in the air – the 'Get Back' sessions had largely taken place in the basement of the Apple HQ on Savile Row

Where? At home and also at Morgan Studios in north-west London, where he booked in as "Billy Martin"

Press campaign? A press release in the form of a "self-interview" in which Macca says he doesn't plan to make any more records with The Beatles. So nothing major to report there

Ingredients: The break-up of The Beatles; Linda

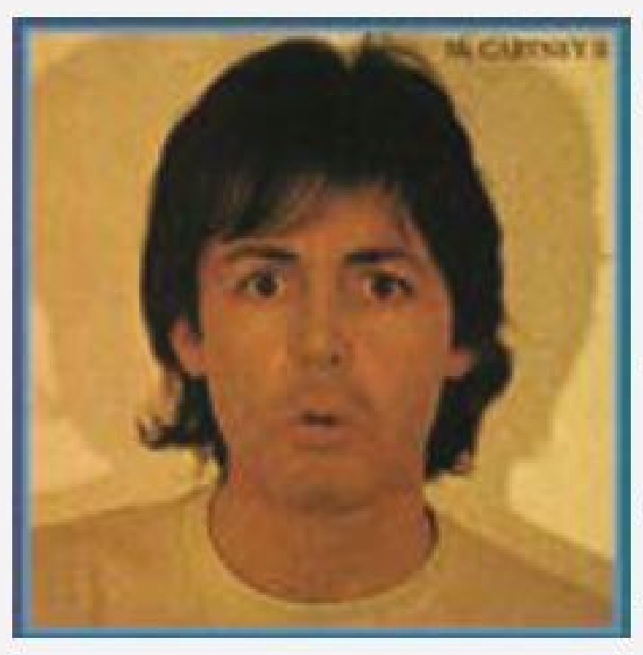
Gear: Studer four-track tape recorder, guitars, drums

Personnel: Paul; Linda

Vibes: Tuneful and wistful as Macca takes refuge from the world in domesticity of all kinds

Sleeve: A self-confessed "arty" shot of berries and a bowl on a wall, with the remainder of the image blacked out. Rear cover is Macca with the infant Mary inside his jacket

Standout tracks: "Junk", "Maybe I'm Amazed", "The Lovely Linda"



McCARTNEY II PARLOPHONE, 1980

★★★★

What? The jaunty art-pop sequel, compiled from songs written and recorded during downtime from Wings at Macca's Scottish farm in 1979. Busy guitar. Cool electro-pop. Pleated trousers. It's that kind of vibe

Where? Recorded at home – or at least one of his homes – after he was busted for pot in Japan and decided to use the cancellation of the Japanese tour as an occasion to break up the band

Press campaign? Doesn't need to do too much profile-wise, what with the pot bust and everything. Also, "Wonderful Christmastime" from a few months before had been a big hit. The record gets hostile reviews at the time, though "Waterfalls" (ballad, sir!) and "Temporary Secretary" (cheeky, experimental) show impressive skills

Ingredients: Break-up of Wings; happiness with Linda

Gear: Studer 16-track. There's also technical assistance from Eddie Klein. The microphones? They were "bypassing the recording console", FYI

Personnel: Paul, Linda

Vibes: Tuneful and playful as Macca takes refuge from the world in domesticity of all kinds

Sleeve: Pic by Linda of Paul looking as if he's just seen someone breaking into his car

Standout tracks: "Waterfalls", "Temporary Secretary". The bluesy "On The Way" is very good, too

McCARTNEY III UNIVERSAL, 2020

★★★★

What? It's rockdown in lockdown, with Macca making lemonade from the "new normal"

Where? Again, recorded at home – or at least at his studio very near home, the former windmill at Hog Mill Hill in Sussex – after the pandemic forced cancellation of theatre projects, Glastonbury and more

Press campaign? An exclusive interview with *Uncut* magazine. You're very welcome

Ingredients: Global pandemic, domestic bliss

Gear: Bill Black's bass, an Abbey Road Mellotron and a 1954 Telecaster, "a gift from the missus"

Also: iPhone

Personnel: Paul. George Martin is there in spirit, too, as Paul has taken the opportunity to tweak a recording dating from sessions from 1992

Vibes: Tuneful and playful as Macca takes refuge from the world in domesticity of all kinds

Sleeve: What goes around. Having been on the sleeve of *McCartney I*, Mary McCartney takes the pics for *McCartney III*

Standout tracks: "Lavatory Lil", in which McCartney takes a pop at a past foe; the mega "Deep Deep Feeling"

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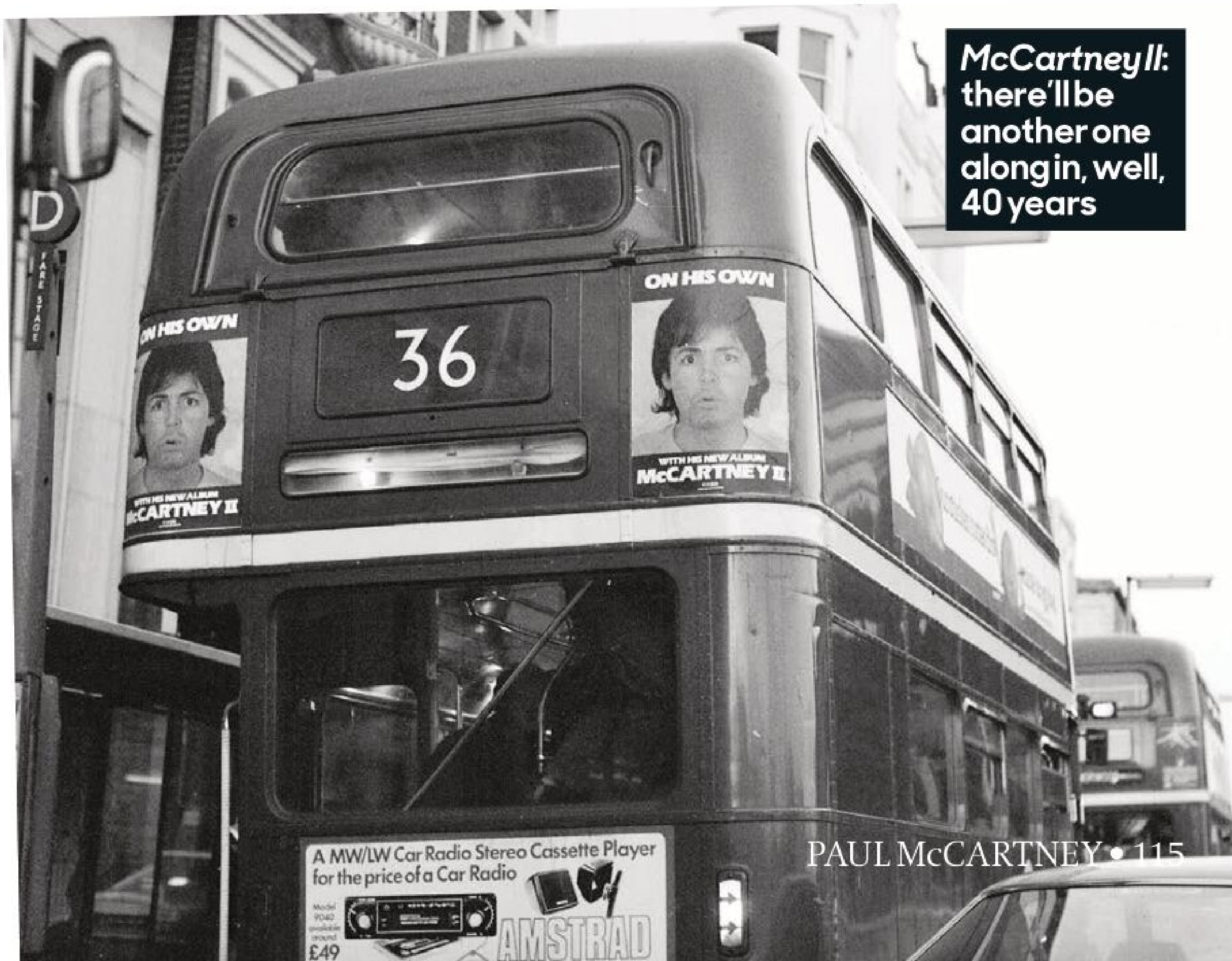
ON HIS OWN
McCARTNEY II
36
ON HIS OWN
McCARTNEY II
A MW/LW Car Radio Stereo Cassette Player for the price of a Car Radio
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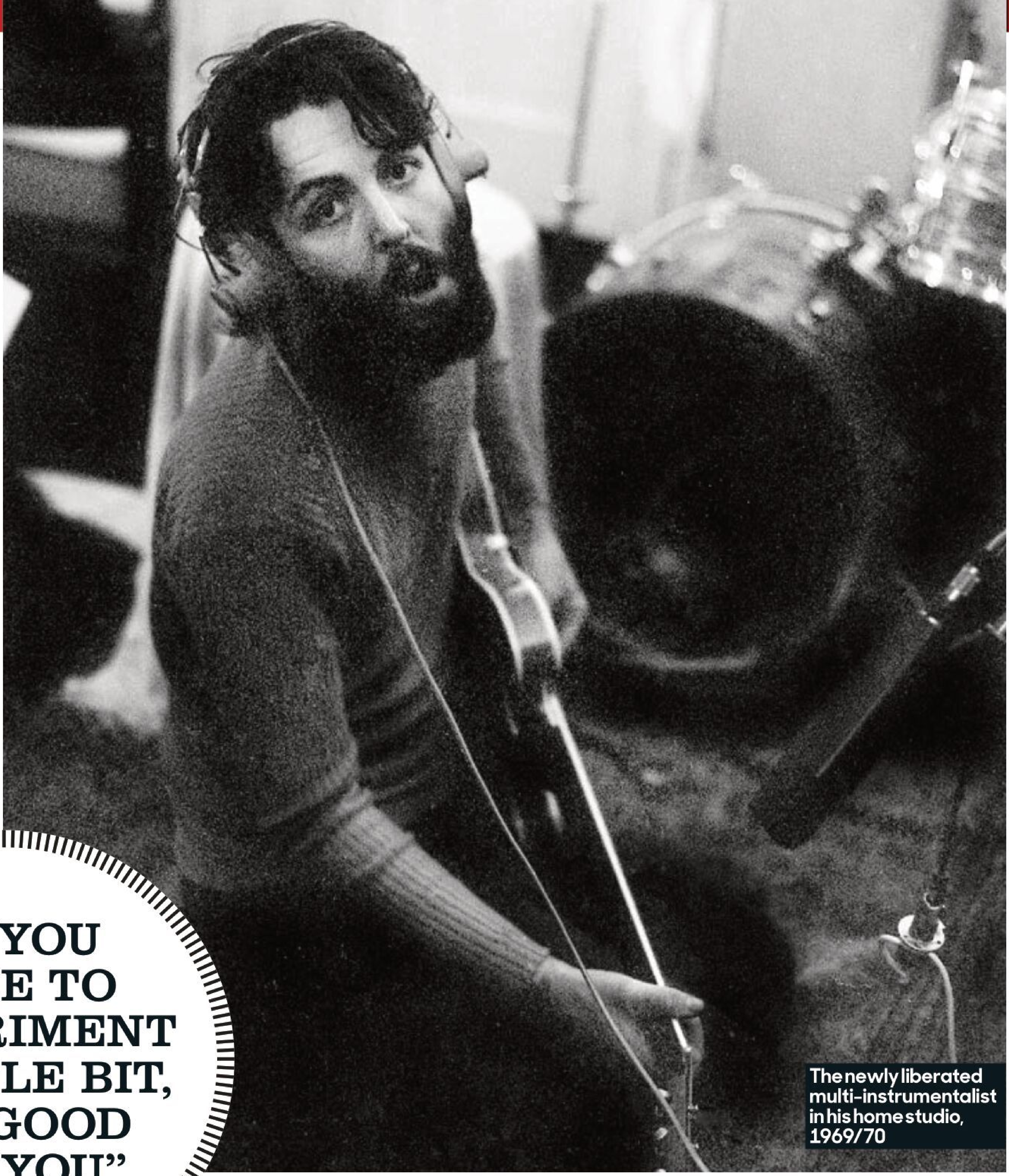
McCartney II: there'll be another one along in, well, 40 years



The newly liberated multi-instrumentalist in his home studio, 1969/70

music has on me and the effect it can have on other people. People come up to me in the street saying, "I had cancer. I'm cured now, but your music really helped me get through it." I'm so proud that the music that we made has had this effect on people – and appears to be still having! C'mon, man! This was supposed to be a little rock'n'roll band that lasted 10 years if that. It's mind-blowing.

What kind of music had that effect on you, then? Something like "God Only Knows". It's just… wow! The thrill it gives me, the inspiration and the solace – whatever you want to call it – it makes me feel great. I want my songs to have that effect, too. Early Elvis stuff, too. When we were just starting out, we'd be sitting round, maybe playing snooker or something, and someone would put the first Elvis album on. It'd make you feel so good. That was always my ambition. "Wow, I get this. This is great. You can feel good without being goody-goody."

Incidentally, did you hear Dylan's album, *Rough And Rowdy Ways*? I always like what he does. Sometimes I wish I was a bit more like Bob. He's legendary… and doesn't give a shit! But I'm not like that. His new album? I thought it was really good. He writes really well. I love his singing – he came through the standards albums like a total crooner. But, yeah, I like his new stuff. People ask me who I'm a fan of and Bob Dylan and Neil Young always make the list.

"IF YOU DARE TO EXPERIMENT A LITTLE BIT, IT'S GOOD FOR YOU"

Tell us about "Lavatory Lil". This is a bit of light relief? To tell you the truth, she was someone we rubbed up against. You get a few of 'em in life, these people who screw you over. I thought, 'I'll have you. I'll write a song. You'll never know it's about you, because I won't tell anyone. But I'll know. And people who know who I'm talking about will know.' So I drew on my dislike of this individual and made her into a song character. It's a simple little song, and I love playing it. The vocal was the first take. It's like I say, if you think you're doing a posh, important album, you might go over the vocal and think you can improve it. But this was: "It'll do." My missus gave me this beautiful little 1954 Telecaster which I haven't played too much until this album, so it gave me a great chance on the lead part of "…Lil".

There's a very reflective tone on this album. "Women And Wives" contains a lot of wisdom. "*Many choices to make/Many chains to unravel/Every path that we take/ Makes it harder to travel*". Is this you, handing down advice to a younger generation? I think so. This arrived when I was reading a book on Lead Belly. I was deep in the South and the blues and I sat at the piano one day and started playing the chords at the beginning of the song. Lead Belly inspired that vocal style – "*Well, mama…*" – that Southern blues thing. It suited that song. "*Hear me, husband and lovers/What we do with our lives…*" Then I was off on the trail. So suddenly, "*Seems to matter to others*". Hey, let's think about what we're handing down to them. As a parent and grandparent, you think that kind of stuff.

How about these lines in "Seize The Day": "*The old ways fade away/There'll be no more sun/And we'll wish that we had/Held on to the day*". Is this age and experience talking? I don't go looking for it! Your life is naturally running along those lines. With songwriting, I get an idea, then I try to work out what it is I'm saying. I follow a trail, like a trail of breadcrumbs leading you out of the woods. I was in the first verse of "Seize The Day", and completely at random – it's always random – I came up with, "*Yankee toes and Eskimos*". What's this all about? I like it, but how the hell am I going to get out of this? Where are these breadcrumbs leading? Then out came, "*Can turn to frozen ice*". That's good! Not every day of your life is sunny, so when these cold days come, let's seize the day – hang on to the good times. So it became philosophical, but I didn't set out to write a philosophical song.

You hope a flash of inspiration will appear and that you'll notice it and grab it? Yes, that's something I'm very grateful for in life. So much of what I've done, I didn't particularly set out to do! Somebody might say something, I picked up on it and then we ran with it. A lot of what The Beatles did was like that. Ringo might say, "It's been a hard day's night" or "Tomorrow never knows" and me and John would go, "What?!! Write that down! What a great title!" So much of what happens arrives out of the blue. One of the things about The Beatles is that we noticed those accidents. We loved them and grabbed them.

The editing work on "Deep Deep Feeling" – the cuts and sound textures – is incredible. Do you see this as a continuation of the experimental aspect of your career that began in the '60s? Yes, it is part of a thread for me. Round about the time, The Beatles were known for being 'The Beatles' – if you know what I mean. We were able to sidestep that with *Sgt Pepper*, which was very liberating. The *McCartney* records have always been very liberating. If you dare to experiment a little bit, it's good for you. I've always loved that.

Success isn't the be-all and end-all. It's the pushing forward with ideas that matters, right? I love it! What can you do that you haven't done? On some parts of this album, I got back into tape loops, which I hadn't done for a while. In the '60s, I was mad for tape loops. I was going to do a tape loop symphony. It might have taken a day or two because it's quite a lengthy process! I had some dreams, though. But it's the dreams that sustain you. You think, 'Yeah, that would be a great idea!' You get that good feeling in your belly. You may never even get round to it, but you've enjoyed it.

The journey is often more interesting than the destination? Yeah, I think so. It's good to

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give yourself freedom. When I was growing up, I didn't have the opportunity because I was in school – you'd get caned if you gave yourself freedom! I didn't have any money, so I couldn't just take freedom. I had to pretty much do what everyone agreed on – except with music. Then I met John and George and, later, Ringo. When you overcome those circumstances, it's great when you finally find, hey, it's allowed! Linda used to say that. I'd sit there going, "I don't know, I don't know…" and she'd say, "It's allowed." Wow! That's like all-time philosophy for me. "It's allowed." So often in your life you think, 'Oh, I daren't do this. Oh no, I can't do that. I shouldn't do this because it'll have this effect… I shouldn't, I shouldn't, I shouldn't, I shouldn't.' Then you suddenly think, 'It's allowed.' And you do it and it's great.

But you're Paul McCartney! Surely you can do what you want? Ha ha. I wish I knew I was Paul McCartney, it would be so much easier… Look, you can achieve a lot of fame, but you're still the same person inside. Hopefully, you grow and learn things – but we're all a bit fragile inside. Everyone has this 'Should I? Shouldn't I?'. Even the biggest braggarts, guys who you would think would never worry about a thing, when you get to know them a bit more, you realise they're just like the rest of us. I don't think it's a bad thing. It's life, isn't it?

That's how you felt at the end of The Beatles, I guess? Exactly.

Tell me about the guy in that photo on the *McCartney* sleeve. He looks happy.
I was really happy, yeah. The Beatles had become such a business machine, and with the arrival of Allen Klein, the whole thing, every day, was very unpleasant. It became a drag. You were fighting for your existence, for your livelihood. We had all done well. We'd all sold millions of records. We were looking forward to enjoying this in our future. Suddenly, it was under threat. I had to go and fight it, unwillingly. It was a very unpopular move, stopping this guy. But we did stop him and many, many years later, they all acknowledged that. You'll get Yoko and Olivia now saying, "Wow, good job you did that, Paul." Because they could see what the value of it is. Beatles going to iTunes wouldn't have happened. It would have been Allen Klein going to iTunes. But, yeah, immediately after that, one of the things we decided to do was get the hell out.

So there you were, on the farm, finding solace in a young family… Yes. I had this little place in Scotland. So we just went out there. "It's so remote, no-one can be bothered trekking all the way up here for a meeting." It was a good period. We grabbed our freedom – you know what, we seized the day! Also, I had a new baby; I'd not been a father before, so I was very happy. Fast forward to today and my new album cover has been taken by that baby!

There's a lovely bit on "Winter Bird/When Winter Comes" where you sing, *"Must fix the fence by the acre plot… dig a drain by the carrot patch…"* That could be you in 1970.
It's me, remembering that period and writing a song from the point of view of that man, making a home for his family in the countryside. That's what I used to do. Paint the roof, fix the drains, fix the fence, whatever. I know a lot of people these days are getting into that. It's very satisfying. In my case, the horror was how heavy The Beatles' situation had become, but for a lot of people these days it's the horror of what's going on with the world – particularly this year with Covid. I just want to plant some vegetables for my family and see them grow. I got very ambitious. I made a kitchen table. I'm incredibly proud of it.

Is it still standing?
It is, yeah. I had a horror moment once when I was talking to one of my guys. "Did you move that table?" "Yeah, we had to move it." "Do you know where it is?" "No…" So they scoured everywhere. I had the screaming abdabs because one of my guys said, "There is a pile of planks in the corner." "Have they got dovetailed joints in them?" "I don't think so." It was very fraught for a while. Then it showed up. That was probably the best day of the month.

A Mellotron, as heard on "Strawberry Fields Forever" and the new solo record

When you were working on *McCartney* in London, was it strange not being able to bounce ideas off the others? Yeah, it was. Because right up until that point I'd been working with John, the best collaborator in the world. Suddenly that was taken away. It was very difficult. But I thought, 'Well, I'm not going to worry about it. I'm going to sling some ideas down, have a little go on the drums.' I had my own stuff at the house for my own fun, I wasn't going into the studio with The Beatles. I wasn't

REVOLUTIONS IN HIS HEAD!

We chart McCartney's experimental progress through 11 essential compositions…

"TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS" REVOLVER, 1966

Yes, we know it's *John*'s song, but the tape loopery for this is pure Mad Macca: "electronic symphonies" sonically spliced and diced at home on his Brennell tape recorder.

"FLYING" MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR, 1967

Instrumental, intergalactic easy listening. That spooked bassline is the soundtrack to space pods docking on some faraway Foxbase Alpha.

"KREEN/AKRORE"

McCARTNEY, 1970

Named after a Brazilian tribe who shun outsiders, "Kreen/Akrore" is a suitably unwelcoming mosaic of overdubs, heartbeat drum breaks and gurning, ghostly chanting.

"LOUP (1ST INDIAN ON THE MOON)" RED ROSE SPEEDWAY, 1973

Like Can covering Floyd's *Dark Side…*: groove-driven, smoke-ring atmospherica that's as far away from "My Love" as it's possible to get.

"MONKBERRY MOON DELIGHT" THRILLINGTON, 1977

Experimento incognito! Macca's instrumental big-band reimagining of *Ram* is all pretty leftfield – this mariachi-marching-band madness moves the needle into the red.

"MORSE MOOSE & THE GREY GOOSE" LONDON TOWN, 1978

Fairport Convention-style sea-shanty storytelling dissolves into full-bore progressive rock, delivered with disco-soul intensity. Phew!

"CHECK MY MACHINE"

McCARTNEY II, 1980

Earwormy, ansaphone dub pop, from the album that invented Beck. Honourable mention to "Blue Sway" from the outtakes – a swooning, string-driven bit of Bowieness.

"STRAWBERRIES OCEANS SHIPS FOREST"

STRAWBERRIES OCEANS SHIPS FOREST, 1993

Macca's foray into bleepy electronica still seems strange decades on. Abetted by legendary producer Youth, this is relentless, remorseless glo-stick '90s.

"PLASTIC BEETLE"

LIVERPOOL SOUND COLLAGE, 2000

An aural artwork created at Peter Blake's request – here, our hero chops up old Beatles audio, alongside swathes of ambient hiss and trance-inducing beats.

"NOD YOUR HEAD"

MEMORY ALMOST FULL, 2007

A grungy relative to "Why Don't We Do It In The Road": a sub-two-minute slab of psych-blues-skronk, crowned by that pub-rock chorus.

"STATION II"

EGYPT STATION, 2018

A travelogue in 48 seconds, "Station II" is the totally transporting, blissfully ambient bookend to his 2018 triumph. Where are you headed next, Sir Paul? *MARK BENTLEY*

RICHARD ECCLESTONE/REDFERNS

Electro-pop "pottering": recording *McCartney II* at his home studio in Scotland, summer 1979

sweating it. Then suddenly, it became something. "OK, this is an album."

***McCartney*. It's your name above the door. You left yourself nowhere to hide.**
It was one of those things. "What am I going to call it? *McCartney*? Oh, OK. That's a good one. We can do that." As I say, it happened again. I had a bunch of tracks, I had no idea what I was going to do with them. I thought a couple of them might be demos for my next album. I thought, 'No. You've recorded them pretty much all by yourself. It qualifies as a *McCartney* album!'

***McCartney* wasn't the only solo album by a Beatle to be released in 1970. There was *All Things Must Pass* and *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*, too. Did you keep up with what the others were doing?** Yeah, I think we all listened to each other's stuff. There was bitterness at the end of The Beatles, so we weren't ringing each other up a lot. But then it gradually got better. It got better with all of them. I think we all just realised it was a bunch of bullshit and we'd gone through it because it was a breakup which is like a divorce – very painful. So, yeah, I did listen to George's *All Things Must Pass* and everyone's stuff. I would listen to John's and think, 'Ooh...' That same old competitive thing would come back in. I know it happened with him, but later on, because people who were working with him said when he heard "Coming Up", "Oh shit, Paul's written a good one, I'll have to write a good one." So, yeah, we were aware of each other's work.

Is there a key song on *McCartney III* for you? If anyone asked me to sing one of them, it would be "Woman And Wives". I like the opening track, "Long Tailed Winter Bird" because it's a crazy instrumental. The craziest song is "Deep Deep Feeling". It goes on and on and on! There are millions of little changes in it. At one point, I thought I needed to edit it because it's about eight minutes long. I grabbed earphones, played it and got so engrossed in it that I decided to leave it as is. I thought it might be indulgent. Making an album like this is, to some degree, indulgent. But then, it's also about having fun.

You must have a pretty good sense by now of whether something's working or not? Yeah, like the song I'm currently working. The only time that ever happened with The Beatles, me and John came up with "Drive My Car". We'd been messing around with some terrible idea about golden rings for about an hour or so. We couldn't get anywhere with it, destroyed it and remade it. So it's sometimes a good thing to do. But you have to realise that what you're doing is crap first...

Is it important for you to live in the present? You're constantly surrounded by your past – anniversary of this, a new book about them... I don't mind it. You'd be mad to hate that! It's something that doesn't happen to a lot of people – we certainly didn't expect it to happen to us! I'm very proud and pleased and slightly amazed that it's still being listened to. I don't quite understand it, but I love all those things.

What about John's 80th? That was happy sad. It reminds me he was murdered – but it also reminds me of the fantastic times we had. I tend to think back to early times. I remember, we tried to hitchhike to Spain once, but we only got as far as Paris. We liked it so much, we stayed there, just the two of us. We were in this little hotel in Paris; it was so cheap it had fleas. My mum was a nurse, we were very hygienic, then you end up there – bloody hell! Those things bring you together. I had some great hitchhiking experiences with John and George. George and I went to Wales once, we ended up in Harlech. Another time, we decided to head south from Liverpool. We ended up in Exeter. We found a British Legion club where we could get a beer. So when I think of John's 80th, those are the things I think of. It makes me happy to have shared all that with him.

We've been talking 50 years since the *McCartney* album, but it's 60 years since The Beatles played Litherland Town Hall after returning from Hamburg. Do you recall that as a turning point? Aintree Institute, Litherland Town Hall... we used to play all those gigs quite regularly. It's funny, the memories that come into your head. I think that was when I was doing "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" In the middle of the record, Elvis delivers this little soliloquy – "They say the world's a stage..." So I tried this at Litherland. I glanced at the rest of the band and they were peeing themselves. That was the last time I did that number! I think we were advertised in the *Liverpool Echo* as "Direct from Hamburg!" – so the kids in the audience thought we were Germans. We had our hair forward, our leather jackets on, we looked different... They were quite surprised when we started talking Liverpool English.

Thinking back to the sentiment on "Winter Bird/When Winter Comes", are you ever tempted to exchange albums and tours for the simpler life? Fix the fence, dig a drain... Not really. I got a lot of that in my life, when I was with Mary and her family down on the farm. I'm very lucky – I can go out on my old gee-gee, go into the woods and lose myself. I love nature, I always have done. It's so calming and inspirational. When we were kids, we used to live on the perimeter of Liverpool. You'd walk one yard and you were in Lancashire. Then you'd walk a mile and you were in a village where they spoke very differently. There was always a sense that you were falling off the edge of the world. I fell off the edge of Liverpool into nature. So it's not so much that I would retire – I'm very happy to be able to go to the studio and hang with my buddies. I still enjoy that in my life.

> "I FELL OFF THE EDGE OF LIVERPOOL INTO NATURE"

Capitol guys: recording *McCartney III* at home

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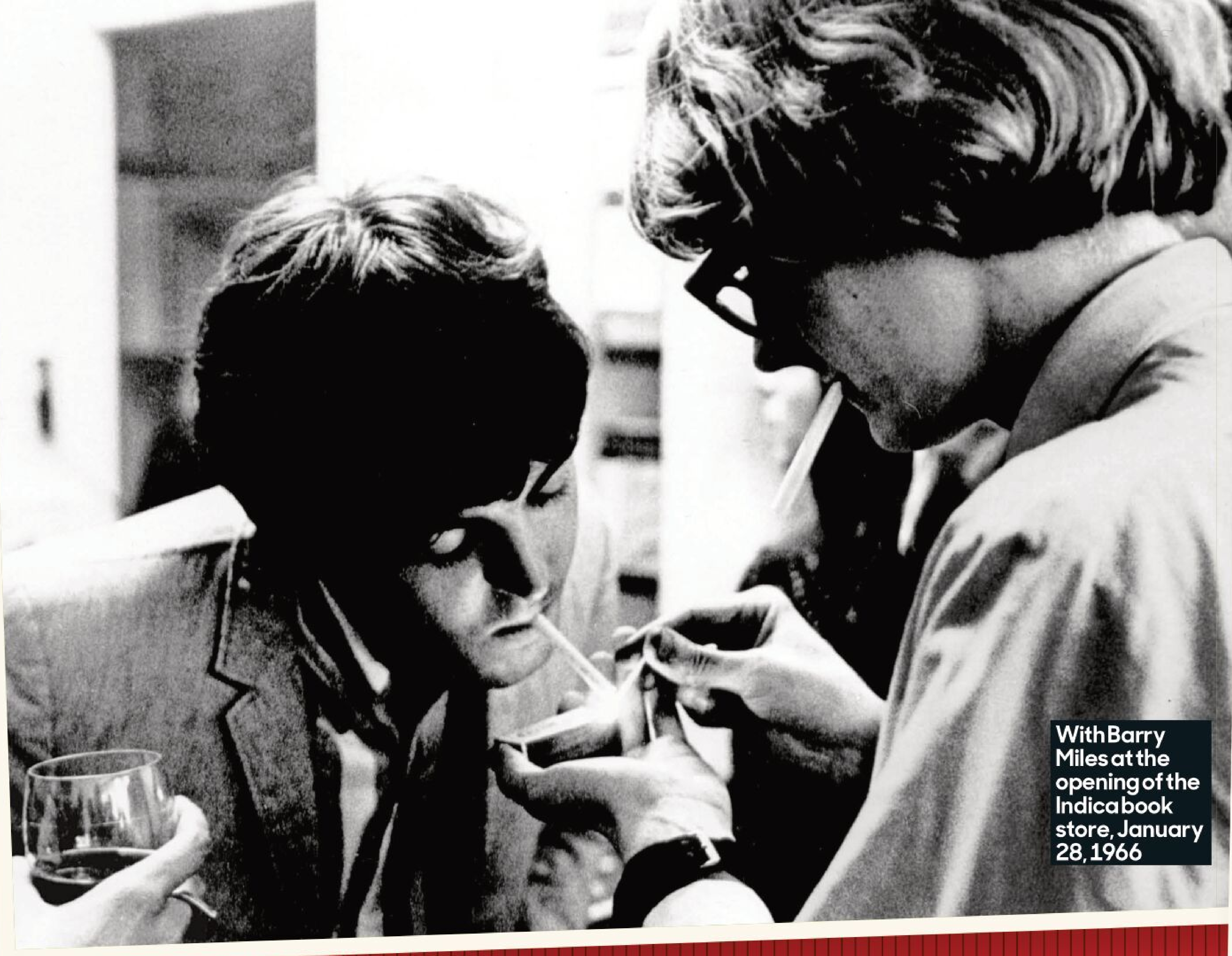
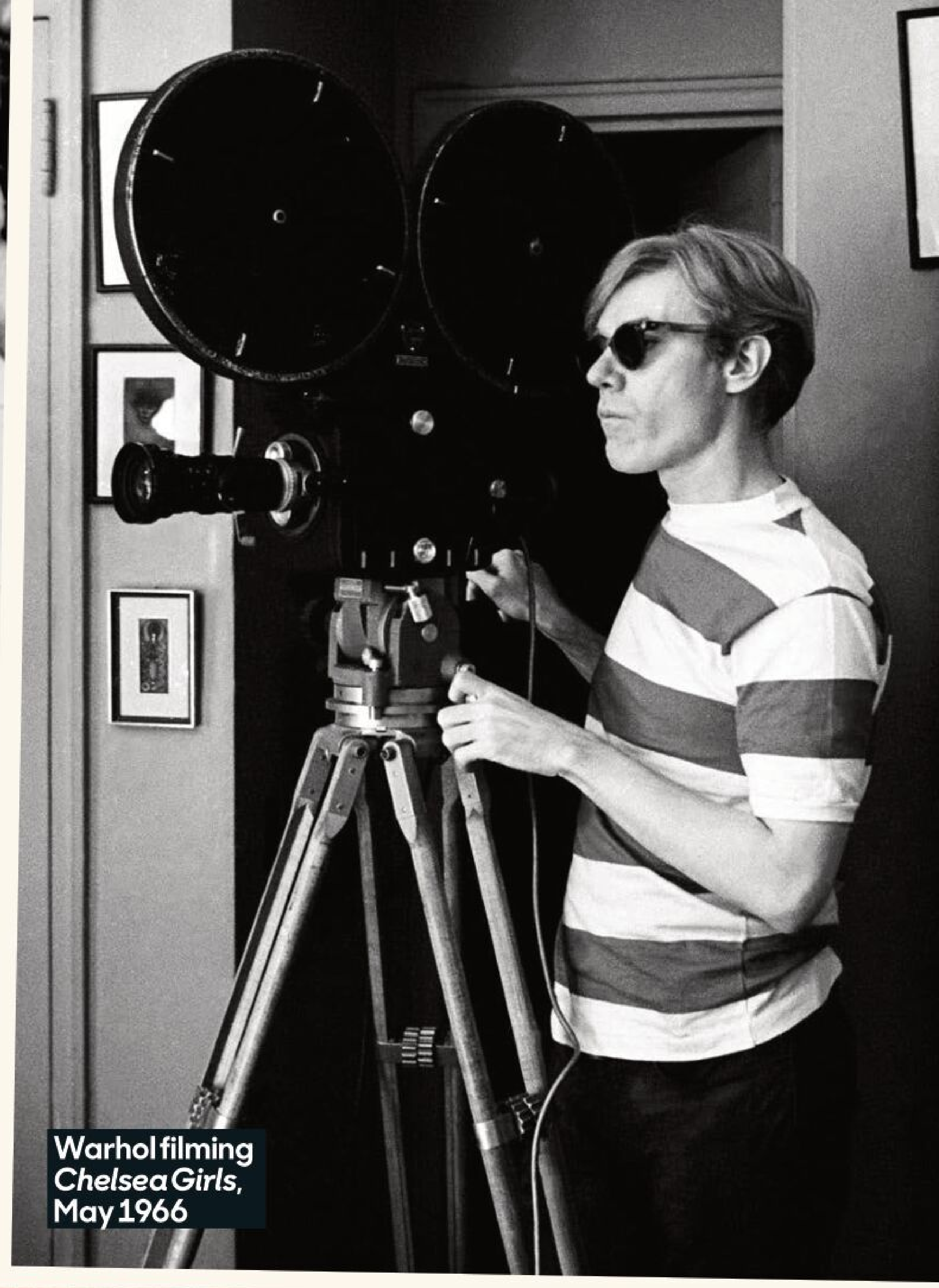
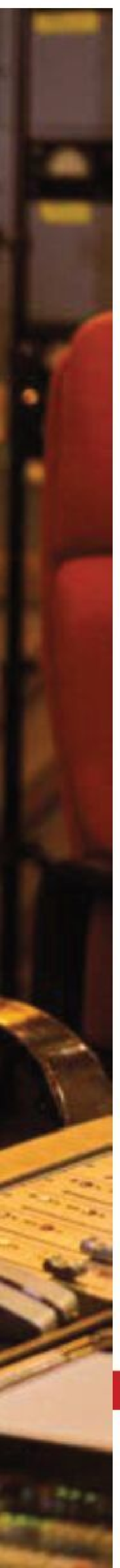


With Barry Miles at the opening of the Indica book store, January 28, 1966



Warhol filming *Chelsea Girls*, May 1966



"McCARTNEY GOES TOO FAR…"

Paul's adventures in the avant-garde…

IF you wanted to put a precise date on Paul McCartney's introduction to the world of the avant-garde, you could pin it on August 28, 1964. That's when Bob Dylan gave him a joint in the Delmonico Hotel at Park Avenue and 59th in New York. McCartney was already a fan of the Beats, but the experience instantly placed him on one side in the decade's conflict between straights and squares, one that he would occupy with increasing self-assurance and excitement.

McCartney's intellectual curiosity had been piqued during his relationship with Jane Asher. After he moved into the Asher family home on Wimpole Street in late 1963, he became part of their politically liberal and artistically curious household. Mother Margaret was a teacher at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (George Martin had been her student), while brother Peter offered an entrée to the counterculture through his friend John Dunbar, an artist and poet, then married to Marianne Faithfull. When Peter Asher opened the Beat-influenced Indica bookshop with Dunbar and Barry Miles in 1965, McCartney became heavily involved, drawing him ever further into the world of the surreal and avant-garde.

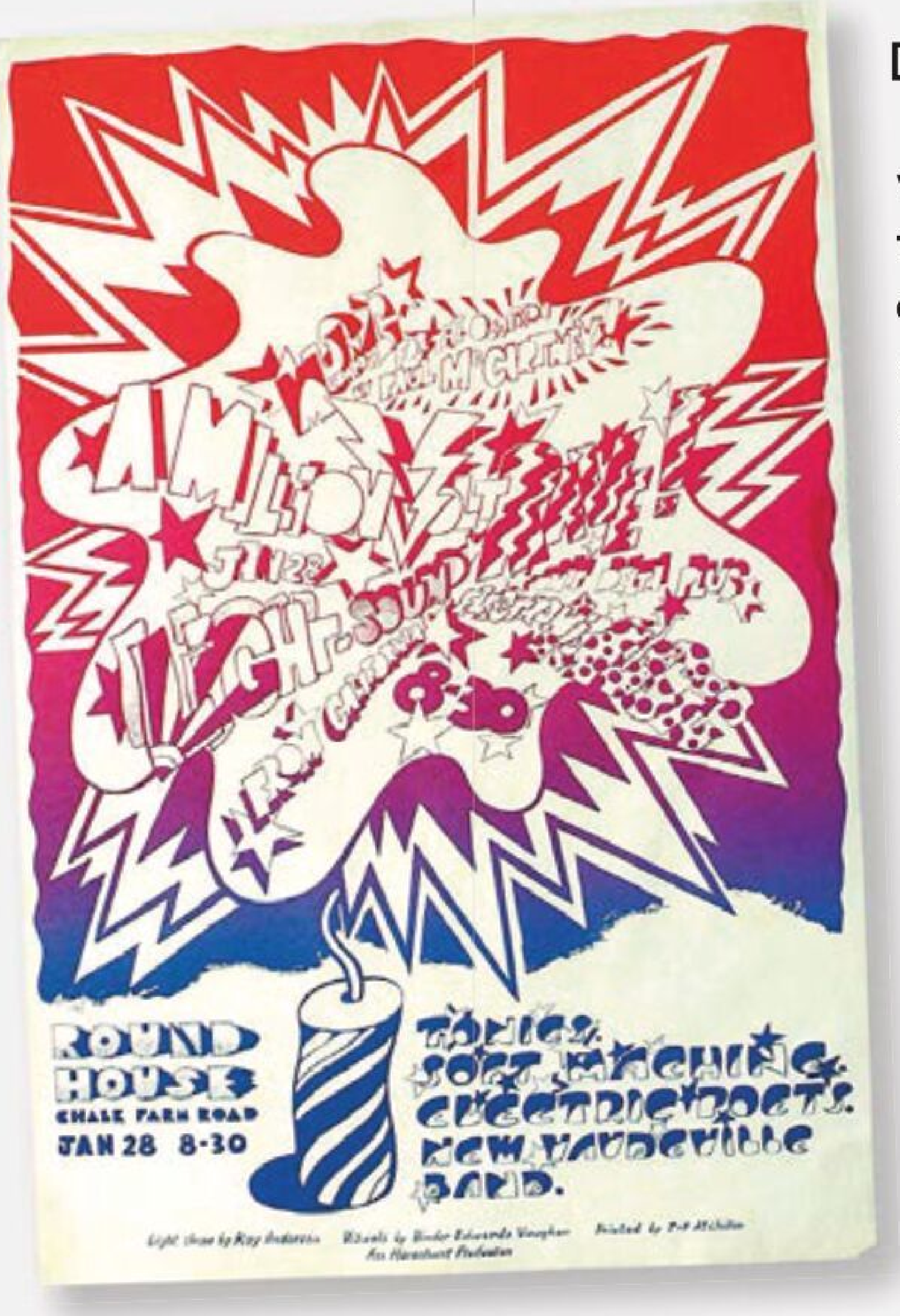
"Paul and I got very interested in Alfred Jarry plays," says Peter Asher. "That's where the word 'pataphysical' came from. We went to poetry readings and concerts together."

Indica bookshop and gallery was located in Mason's Yard next to the Scotch of St James. It was run largely by Barry Miles, who met Dunbar after Allen Ginsberg's 1965 Royal Albert Hall poetry reading. McCartney and Miles became close and McCartney helped set the shop up – literally installing the shelves. He designed the wallpaper and flyer, was the first customer and made regular donations to keep it afloat. Through Indica, he became interested in experimental film. He made avant-garde 8mm home movies and held screenings of films by the likes of Stan Brakhage at his house in St John's Wood. In 1966, he lent his projector to Andy Warhol for a screening of *Chelsea Girls* at gallerist Robert Fraser's house. When Indica spawned a newspaper, *The Global Moon Edition: Long Hair Times*, McCartney offered prize money for an experimental film script, christening himself "Ian Lachimoe, the Polish New-Wave film director". Later he supported the *IT* newspaper both financially and by granting it exclusive interviews.

Inevitably, McCartney also became fascinated by avant-garde music. He attended performances by modernist composers including Luciano Berio and experimental jazzers AMM. At home, he investigated tape loops and electronic music – creating a 1965 Christmas mixtape called 'Unforgettable' for his fellow Beatles, featuring songs, samples, spoken word and tape loops. He even toyed with releasing an entire album of tape loops called 'Paul McCartney Goes Too Far' – but instead channelled his interest in loops into augmenting "Tomorrow Never Knows", a track influenced by Lennon's experiments with LSD.

In 1967 he went even further. At Abbey Road with the other Beatles, he created a surrealist sound collage to be played at the Million Volt Light And Sound Rave at the Roundhouse. A celebration of electronic music, the event featured Unit Delta Place – a group featuring Delia Derbyshire and Brian Hodgson from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. The 14-minute track "Carnival Of Light" remains one of the most sought-after pieces of unreleased Beatles music. McCartney also discussed creating an alternative electronic version of "Yesterday" with Derbyshire.

By 1967, McCartney was fully immersed in the counterculture, embracing the political as well as the artistic side of the avant-garde. He attended UFO happenings and funded pro-marijuana adverts in *The Times*. *Sgt Pepper*, *Magical Mystery Tour* and Apple all had their origins in the avant-garde world McCartney discovered a few short years before. *PETER WATTS*



JOHN HOPPY HOPKINS/REDFERNS , ANTI VISALLI/GETTY IMAGES

RELEASE DATE
1997–
2021

PAUL McCARTNEY

THE BOOKS

Paperback (and fancy hardback) writer… The books that Paul had a substantial hand in.

BY MICHAEL BONNER

FOR SOMEONE WHO has been front page news since he was 21 years old, what's the point of writing an autobiography? What could Paul McCartney possibly add to the hours of interviews he's already given, the acres of print devoted to his every move, the reels of film footage that have assiduously documented his every move since 1963…?

His point of view, for one. At a time when he wanted to reassert his role in The Beatles' narrative, McCartney collaborated on an official biography with Barry Miles, his old mucker from the Indica Gallery days. "Based on 35 taped interviews with McCartney conducted over a period of six years, from 1991 – 1996", according to Miles, **Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now** ★★★★ sought to "dispel some of the inaccuracies which are passed on from biography to biography". McCartney himself was more specific. "With John's tragic death, it [*The Beatles' creative legacy*] became very much naturally centred on John as the spirit of The Beatles," McCartney told Michael Parkinson. "I just put forward my side of things."

This was 1997; McCartney was 55. By 2021, as McCartney headed towards his landmark 80th birthday, perhaps there was good reason to look back again, only this time in his own words.

At the beginning of **The Lyrics: 1956 To The Present** ★★★★★, McCartney explains that while "the time has never been right" to write an autobiography, it has been his habit "whether at home or on the road to write new songs" based on his life experiences. Here, in other words, is a self-portrait in 154 songs, spanning two volumes and lavishly illustrated with photos, handwritten lyrics, letters, paintings and more. In its 874 pages, you'll find the philosophy of modern song along with cameos from Bertrand Russell, Dustin Hoffman and June Whitfield.

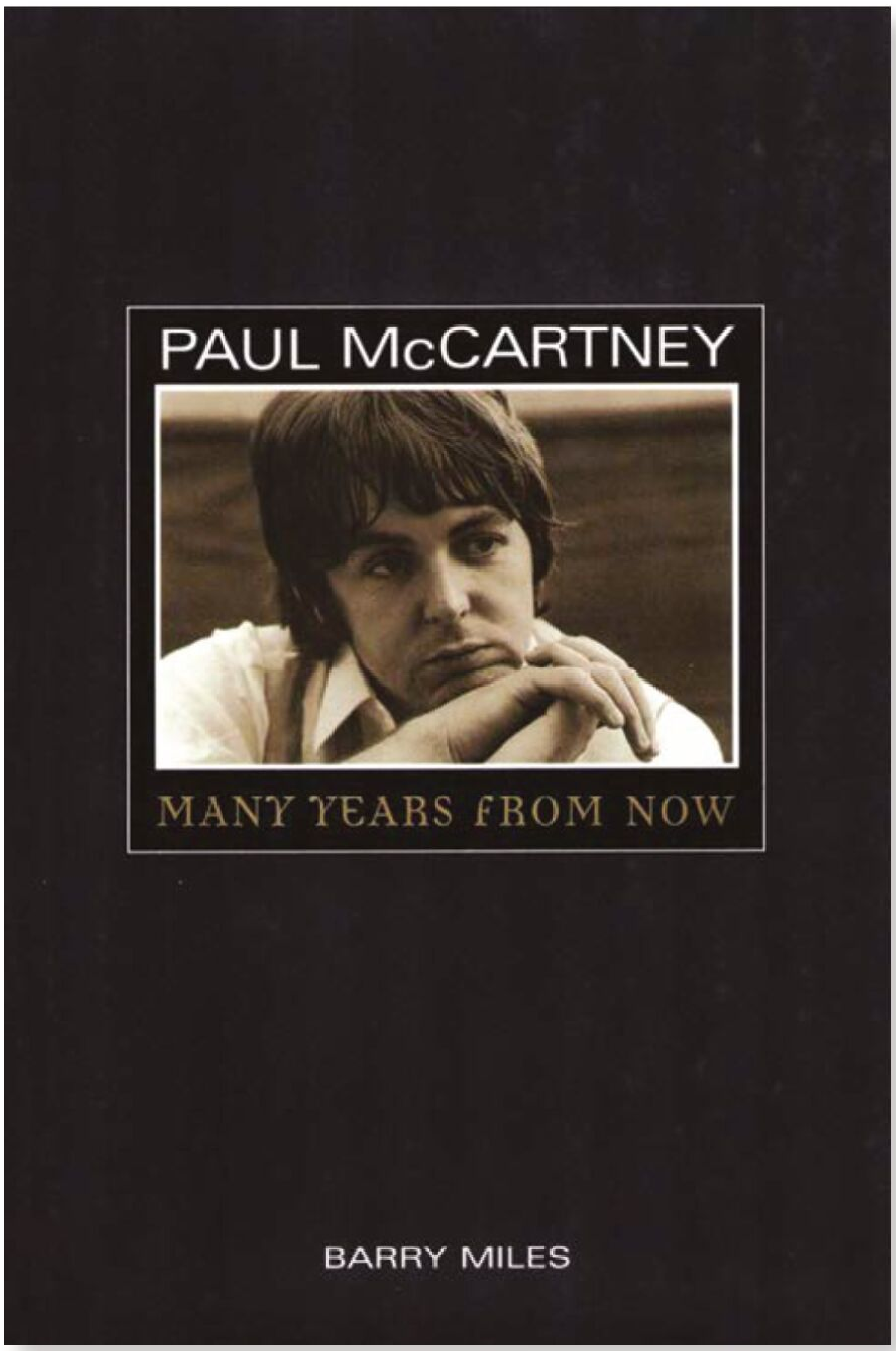
Despite the implication of the title, the book runs alphabetically rather than chronologically. It begins with "All My Loving" (1963), shifting on a year to "And I Love Her", then jumps on to "Another Day" (1971), "Arrow Through Me" (1979) and "Average Person" (1983). In the accompanying text, McCartney vividly recalls the white heat of Beatlemania and the band's landmark appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, writes warmly of "the Ashers of Wimpole Street" and barrels off to Jamaica with Linda before speeding us back to 1963 for encounters with Noël Coward and Marlene Dietrich. All this, in the opening 31 pages.

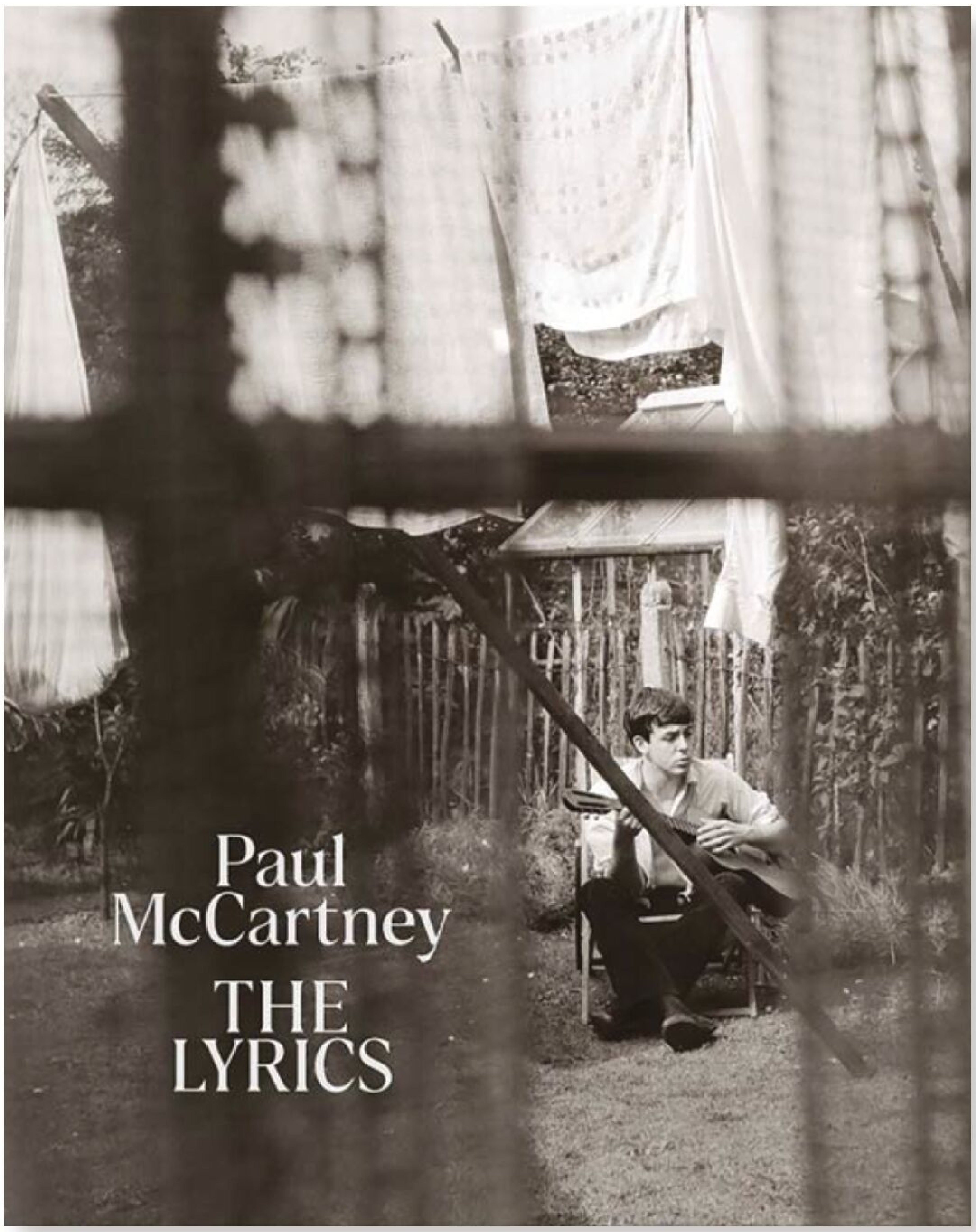
WHAT COULD McCARTNEY POSSIBLY ADD?… HIS POINT OF VIEW, FOR ONE

Chronology? Meh. No-one going to see Paul McCartney live would expect him to open with "Love Me Do" and finish with a medley of songs taken from his latest album. Paul McCartney's songs surround us, simultaneously jumbled up together, uncoupled from sequencing or release dates.

As it transpires, the lack of a chronological structure allows other patterns to emerge naturally – as you bring yourself into what you think about a song, perhaps. The most significant influence on McCartney's songwriting was the death of his mother Mary in October 1956; an event that inspired his first song, "I Lost My Little Girl", written at the age of 14: "And that, as they say, was the start of it."

Inevitably – Lennon also looms large in *The Lyrics*. Their meeting at the Woolton Village Fête at St Peter's Church is approached from various angles in various songs. "Would John and I have met some other way, if I hadn't gone to that fête?" McCartney muses in the entry on "Eleanor Rigby". He marvels that a recording made then of The Quarrymen survived: "This day that proved to be



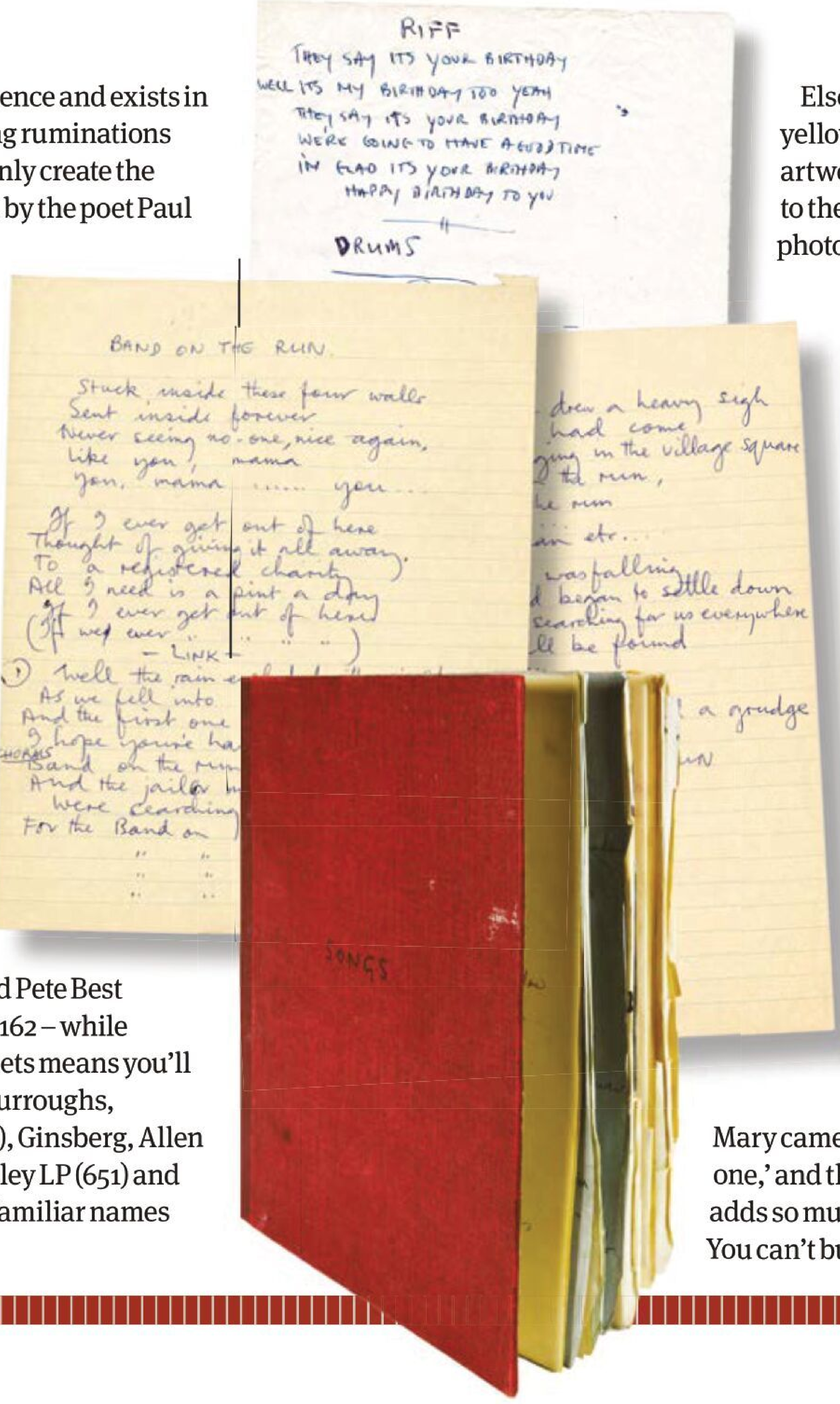


pretty pivotal in my life still has this presence and exists in these ghosts of the past." Such tantalising ruminations are commonplace in the book and certainly create the impression that this is McCartney (aided by the poet Paul Muldoon) at his most candid. But he only gives so much away. There's a lovely story about the last time he met Jane Asher – on Wimpole Street, no less – although he doesn't tell us when this was.

Incidentally, for his entry on "Here, There And Everywhere", McCartney reveals that it "is my own favourite of all my songs". He talks about the song's circularity, its debts to Cole Porter and The Beach Boys, before expressing curiosity about the inscrutability of his own creative processes. "My favourite line is *'Changing my life with a wave of my hand'*. I look at that line now and wonder where it came from. What was it?"

As with any good memoir, the index says a lot about the author. Poor old Pete Best gets one entry – a photo caption on page 162 – while McCartney's fondness for writers and poets means you'll find entries for Joyce, James (228, 246), Burroughs, William S (163, 559), O'Neill, Eugene (253), Ginsberg, Allen (163, 530, 737), Orwell, George (513), Hartley LP (651) and Chaucer, Geoffrey (165) alongside more familiar names from rock'n'roll.

Elsewhere, the handwritten lyrics, sketches, yellowed tour itineraries from 1963, sleeve artwork and other memorabilia add texture to the life of a working musician. But the photographs tell a more intimate and personal story: beyond the shots of The Beatles, Wings or himself as solo performer, the book's most significant visual thread concerns the McCartneys themselves, past and very much present. The photos of his children smiling, playing, on horseback, atop a tour bus, on the farm and on holiday are signifiers of happy, loving times. The final image in the book isn't Paul McCartney, international superstar, standing triumphantly on stage in front of a crowd of thousands. It's Paul McCartney, family man, standing in a poppy field, wearing a T-shirt and jeans, holding hands with his adoptive daughter Heather, looking straight ahead into Linda's camera lens. In the entry for "Woman And Wives", one of the most recent songs in the book, McCartney brings it close to home again: "While I was writing it, around the springtime of 2020, my daughter Mary came into the room. She said, 'Oh, I like that one,' and then started singing her own take on it. It adds so much if someone says, 'Oh, I like that one.' You can't buy that in a hardware store."


RIFF
THEY SAY ITS YOUR BIRTHDAY
WELL ITS MY BIRTHDAY TOO YEAH
THEY SAY ITS YOUR BIRTHDAY
WERE GOING TO HAVE A GOOD TIME
IM GLAD ITS YOUR BIRTHDAY
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

DRUMS

BAND ON THE RUN

Stuck inside these four walls
Sent inside forever
Never seeing no-one, nice again,
like you, mama
you, mama ...... you...

If I ever get out of here
Thought of giving it all away
To a registered charity)
All I need is a pint a day
If I ever get out of here
(If we ever " " ")
– LINK –
① Well the rain
As we fell into
And the first one
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CHORUS Band on the run
And the jailer
Were searching
For the Band on
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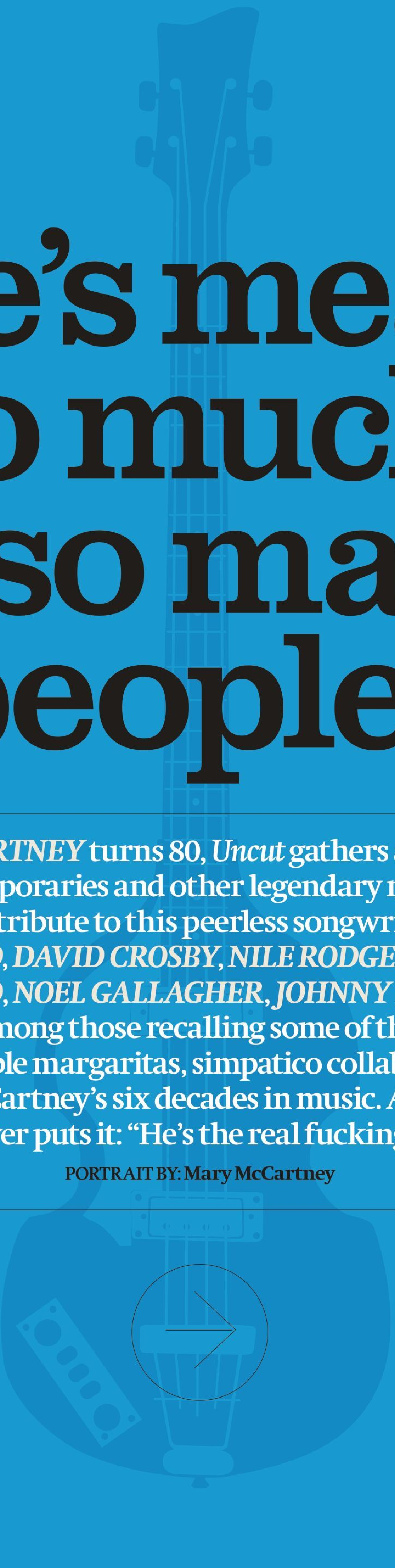
SONGS



"He's meant so much, to so many people"

As ***PAUL McCARTNEY*** turns 80, *Uncut* gathers a cast of friends, esteemed contemporaries and other legendary musicians to share their memories in tribute to this peerless songwriter and performer. ***PETE TOWNSHEND, DAVID CROSBY, NILE RODGERS, ROBERT PLANT, ELVIS COSTELLO, NOEL GALLAGHER, JOHNNY MARR*** and ***PAUL WELLER*** are among those recalling some of the jokes, chance meetings, incredible margaritas, simpatico collaborations and kind words from McCartney's six decades in music. As one impressed observer puts it: "He's the real fucking deal."

PORTRAIT BY: **Mary McCartney**

McCartney in 2021: "The most prolific songwriter in the history of the business" – Brian Wilson to *Uncut*, 2022

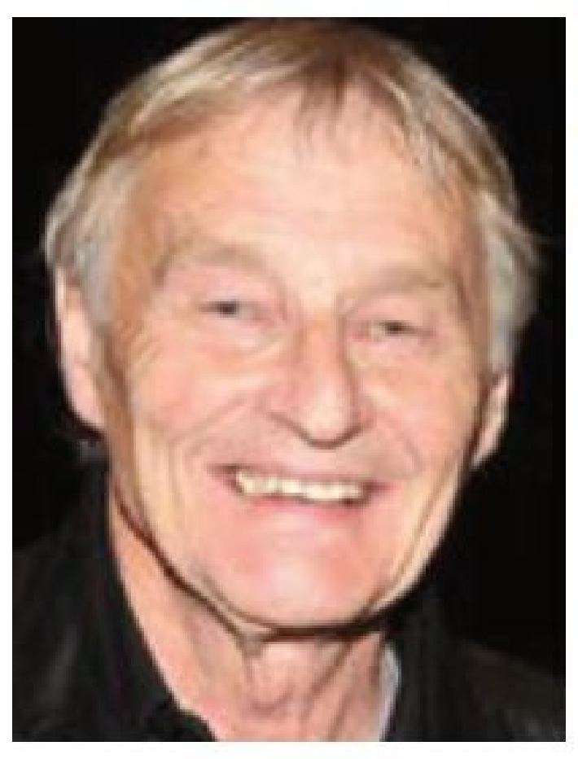
SPECIAL 300th ISSUE
UNCUT
McCARTNEY
MODERN CLASSICS

TAKEN FROM
UNCUT
05/2022

the 1950s

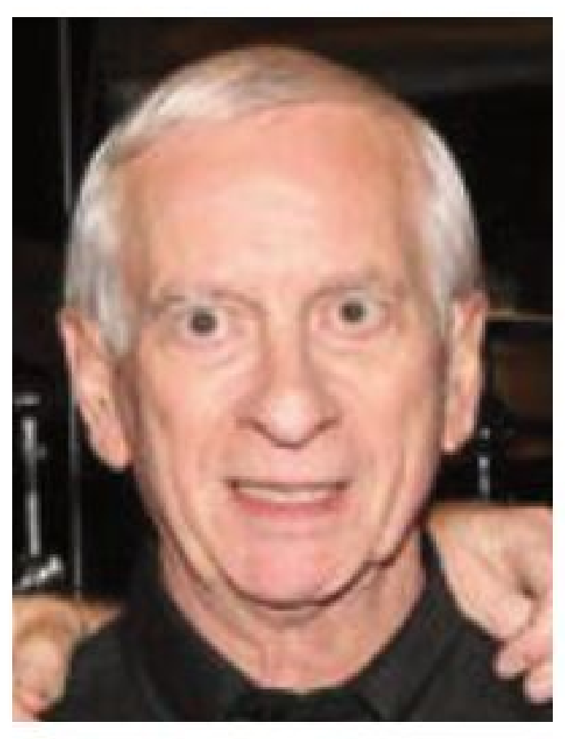
A CHURCH hall in Woolton, Sunday afternoons at Forthlin Road, oatmeal jackets; "He always knew what he wanted…"

"He was trying to audition"

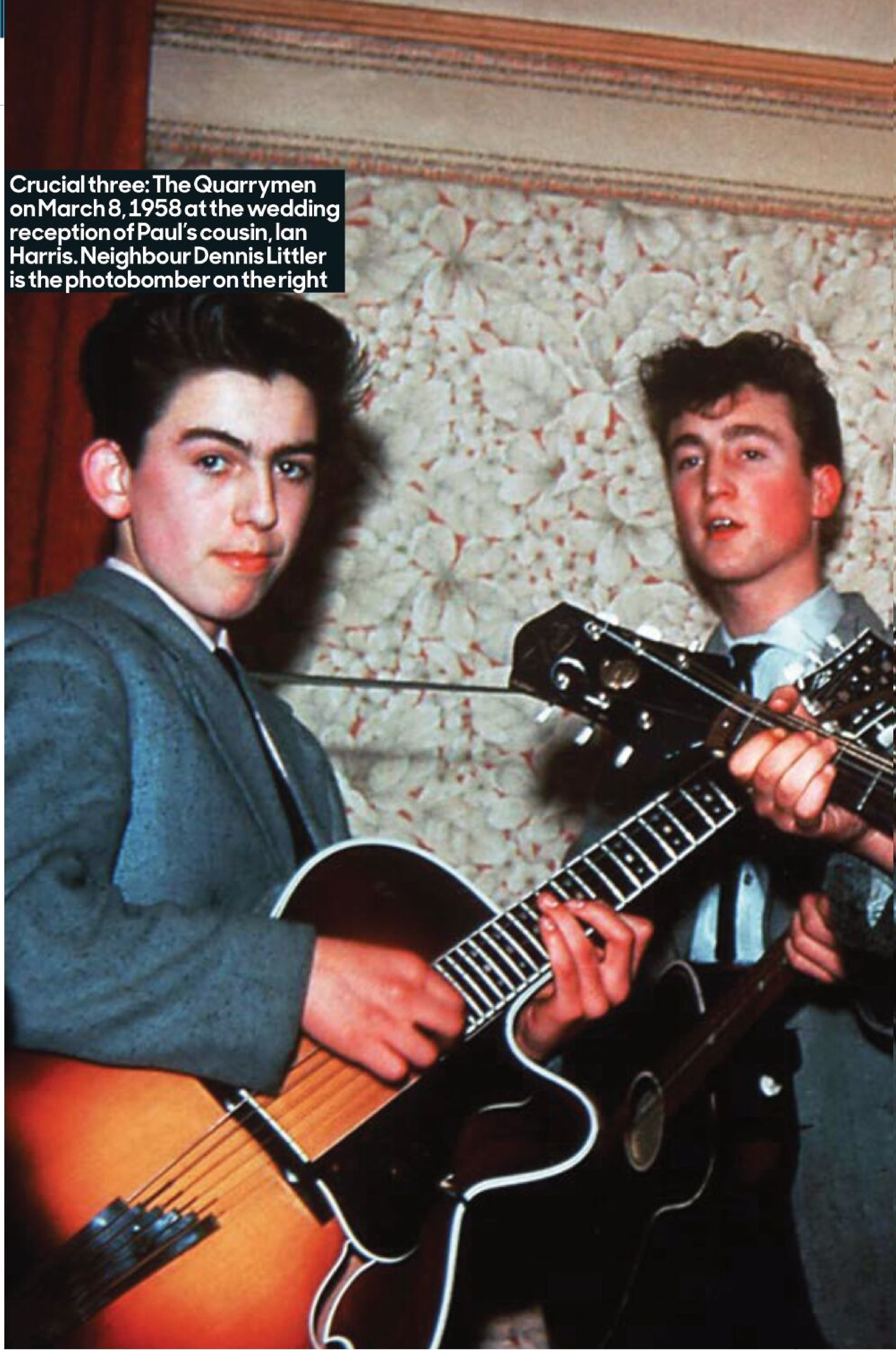


LEN GARRY, The Quarrymen: Paul and I got the number 80 bus home together from Liverpool Institute. I used to go round to his house on Forthlin Road, not far from where I lived. I played with The Quarrymen at the garden fête when Paul met John, on July 6, 1957. I remember Paul coming along that night at St Peter's Church Hall, picking up a guitar – I didn't even know he was left-handed – and playing a couple of chords. I think he was trying to audition for us. John always wanted someone to support him, no matter what he did, and Paul came along at the right time. It wasn't just about playing guitar together or singing, it was about composing as well. The last time I saw Paul was in 1963. Thirty years later, he phoned me up one Sunday afternoon. He asked how I was after John died. I told him I was absolutely devastated. There were no other words for how I felt. The fact that he called me up was a really nice touch. It was the same Paul I'd always known, no airs or graces.

"Oatmeal jackets and white shirts"



COLIN HANTON, The Quarrymen: I first met Paul at St Peter's, when he also met John. He played "Twenty Flight Rock" for John [*as an audition*], who was playing banjo chords on guitar at that time. [*Guitarist*] Eric Griffiths was quite keen for Paul to join us. He said to John: "He could teach us proper chords!" So Paul was invited in. He changed the dynamics of The Quarrymen. Paul decided that we should have some kind of uniform. Hence the photograph at the Wilson Hall in Garston, where he and John are wearing oatmeal jackets and the rest of us are wearing white shirts with bow ties. That was Paul, trying to make us look like a proper band. We used to rehearse at Forthlin Road on Sunday afternoons. It was either George or Paul who found out that we could go into Percy Phillips' studio and pay to make a record [*July 12, 1958*]. So we decided to do "That'll Be The Day", which was one of our live favourites, and Paul had written "In Spite Of All The Danger". He got John Duff Lowe, his friend from school, to play honky-tonk piano. Paul was quite precise with him. He'd say to John: "No, no, I want you to do this…" He always knew what he wanted.



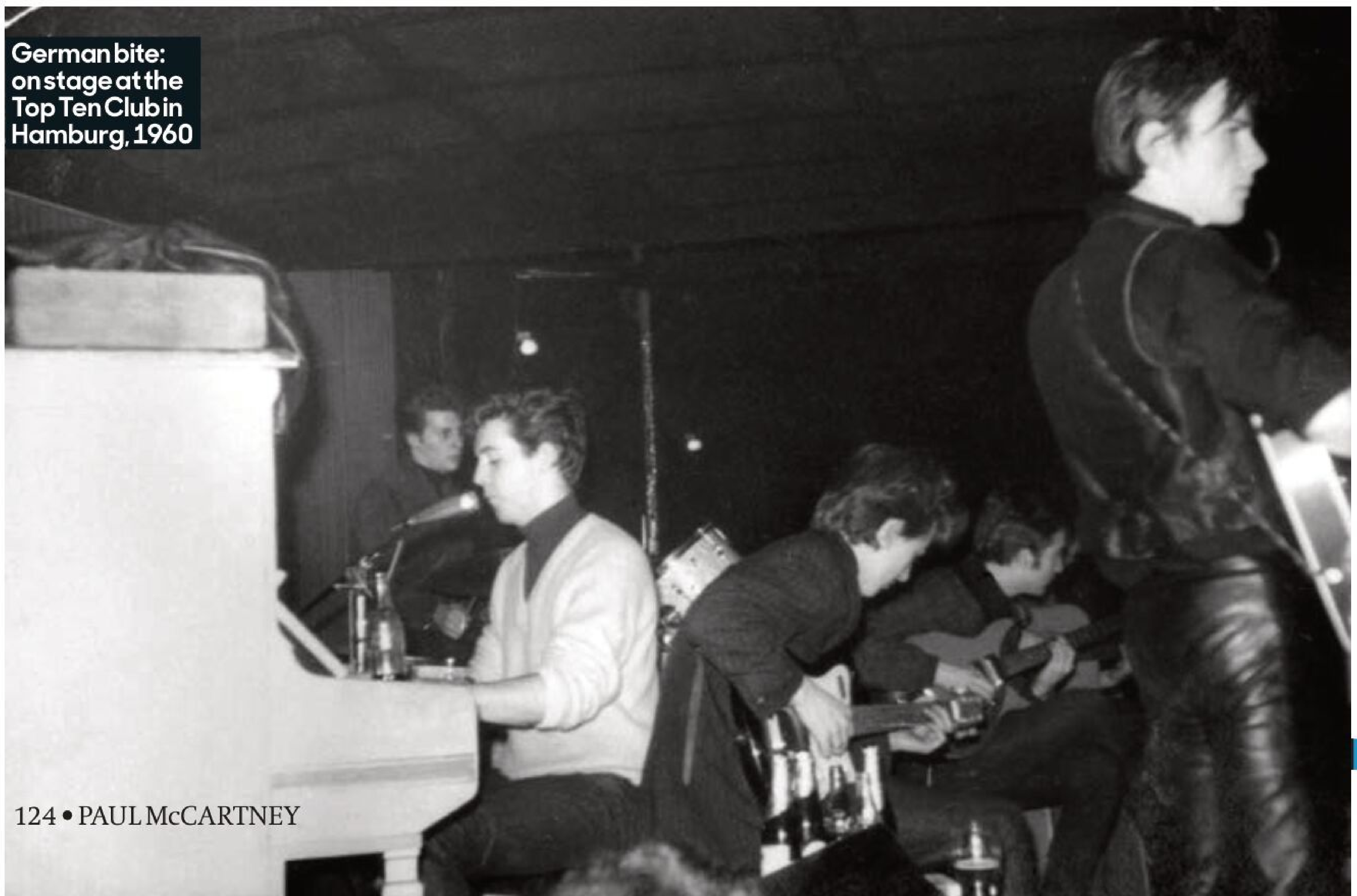
Crucial three: The Quarrymen on March 8, 1958 at the wedding reception of Paul's cousin, Ian Harris. Neighbour Dennis Littler is the photobomber on the right

the 1960s

IN WHICH a false beard, a replacement bass player and a singalong around a pub piano figure highly; popular songs are written during a film shoot and over breakfast; Paul's mid-'60s hair-washing secrets are revealed

"On stage, pretty knackered"

KLAUS VOORMANN: When The Beatles first came to Hamburg I was working as a commercial artist during the day, then I'd watch them at the Top Ten Club most nights. One time I got there long after midnight and the boys were still on stage, pretty knackered. They shouted over: "Come on, Klaus, get up here!" Stuart [*Sutcliffe*] handed me his bass – I'd never even played one before – while Paul went over to the piano and started playing Fats Domino's "I'm In Love Again". He was such a great singer, even back then. He still plays those songs. When I recorded my solo album [*2009's A Sideman's Journey*], Paul remembered "I'm In Love Again" and suggested recording it, with him on piano and me using Stuart's old bass guitar. At one point, I suggested he play a solo twice and he said, "You're cheeky, Klaus. Are you the producer now?" Another time, he played at the Königsplatz in Munich [*2003*] and invited me to the soundcheck. I walked in and stood way at the back, but Paul immediately saw me and waved. Then he whispered something to each band member, went over to the piano and started playing Ray Charles' "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin'". Whenever I went to the club in Hamburg I'd always ask them to play that one. So now he was doing it again, just for me. Isn't that fantastic?



German bite: on stage at the Top Ten Club in Hamburg, 1960

"Hardcore rock'n'roll"

CHAS NEWBY, Temporary Beatle: When The Beatles returned home from their first trip to Hamburg in December 1960, Stuart Sutcliffe stayed there over Christmas with Astrid Kirchherr, so the guys needed a temporary bass player to fill in for Stuart. I got the job through my friendship with Pete Best and played four gigs with the band. The effect of the continuous playing in Hamburg was immediately apparent, particularly Paul's vocal range. We opened the set with Little Richard's "Long Tall Sally", and somewhere in the middle we did Elvis's "Wooden Heart". The audience were crowding around the stage, really excited by the hardcore rock'n'roll, then Paul sings this Elvis ballad, aimed particularly at the female section of the audience, including the German lyrics. Together with the "Direct from Hamburg"

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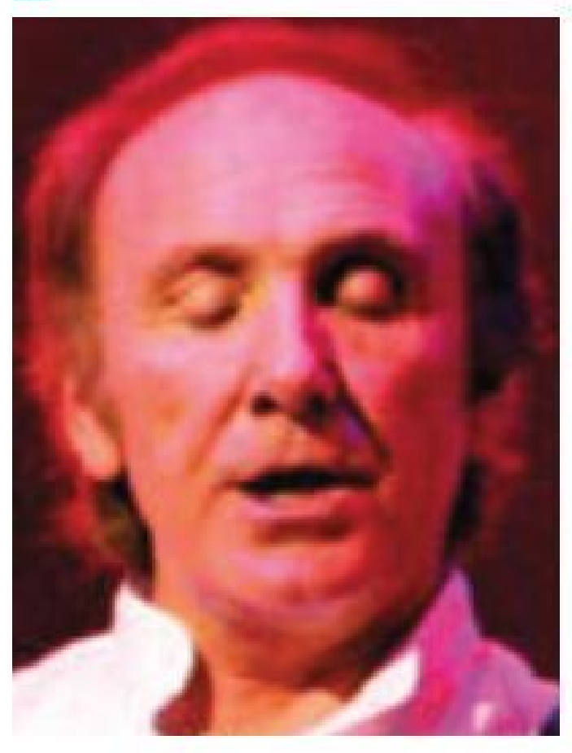
“IT WAS FOUR PEOPLE AGAINST THE WORLD”

RICHARD LESTER

intro, I guess this could have contributed to the idea that the band was actually German. My other lasting impression was Paul finishing the set with Ray Charles’ “What’d I Say”. The promoter, Brian Kelly, thought a fight had broken out and sent in the bouncers, but it was just the punters enjoying themselves.

“His gear was in our front parlour”

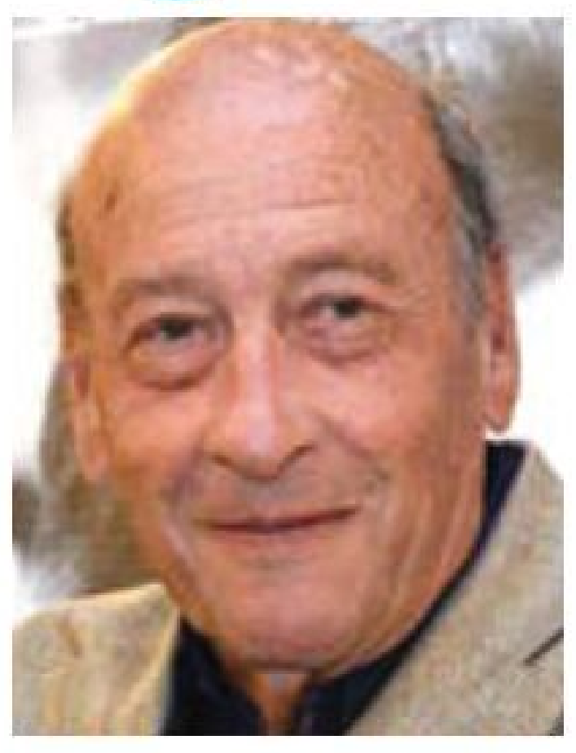


BILLY KINSLEY, The Merseybeats: The sound at the Cavern was great, especially for bass players. The bass resounded off the stone walls and that became a key part of the Mersey sound. Adrian Barber of the Big Three decided that because there were only three in the band, they needed to have the biggest amplifiers going – they were huge, like coffins. When I first saw The Beatles, Paul had just got one as well. I’d never heard a sound like it, it was just awesome. I had to have one! I couldn’t afford one, so I made one myself based on Paul’s. His gear was in our front parlour and I stripped it down and copied it.

I talked to Paul many years later and he said that although a lot of books said Hamburg had made them – and it was probably true – they were never as good as when they were in the Cavern. When they left the Cavern, they were playing 20 minutes a night with girls screaming and nobody could hear. Paul told me that they came offstage one night and he asked Ringo, “Why were you playing that rhythm during so-and-so song?” Ringo said, “I didn’t know we’d played that tonight.” He hadn’t been able to hear what the band was playing.

The Beatles last show at the Cavern was pretty disappointing. They didn’t want to be there, especially John. There was one socket on the stage and it was that sweaty the power went off. While they waited for it to be fixed, Paul started singing what we thought was an old-fashioned song. Many years later, we realised it was ‘When I’m 64’.”

“I got so annoyed with him”



RICHARD LESTER, Director: I first met The Beatles at the BBC Radio Theatre in Northumberland Avenue in London. They were doing a radio show called *Pop Goes The Beatles*. This was November 1963. I thought they were extraordinarily like each other. They protected each other. It was four people against the world – and winning. The first thing we tried to do on *A Hard Day’s Night* was artificially create a difference between the four, so each had a unique characteristic. It’s probably apocryphal, but George was the mean one, they picked on Ringo, John was cynical and Paul was cute.

‘THE BEATLES WERE INTRIGUED’

Jürgen Vollmer, the German photographer responsible for the famous Beatle moptop

“I got to know The Beatles when they first came to Hamburg in 1960. I was an artistic type. I came from art school and was an assistant photographer at the time. Me and my friends – Klaus Voormann and Astrid Kirchherr – were the only people in those clubs that looked different. Otherwise, the audience was all wiseguys. So The Beatles were very intrigued by us and we befriended them.

“John and Paul were always asking me where I got my clothes from. Hamburg was so square, so I’d been going on short shopping trips to Paris for a few years. In the spring of ’61 they came to Hamburg for a second time and I photographed them. John later used one of my photos for the cover of *Rock ’n’ Roll* [1975]. I moved to Paris shortly afterwards, and then, in October, John and Paul hitchhiked over to visit. I took them to the flea markets and they bought similar clothes to mine. Then they told me they wanted their hair cut like mine. I’d always cut my own hair, even at school, because the barbers in Hamburg cut it too short. The ’50s were just unbearable for a young rebellious artist like me. So I took John and Paul to my hotel and that was the beginning of the Beatle haircut. Astrid always pretended that she’d invented it, but it’s not true. John and Paul have set the record straight on that. The weird thing is, besides me, the only two other people in my entire life whose hair I’ve cut are John Lennon and Paul McCartney!”

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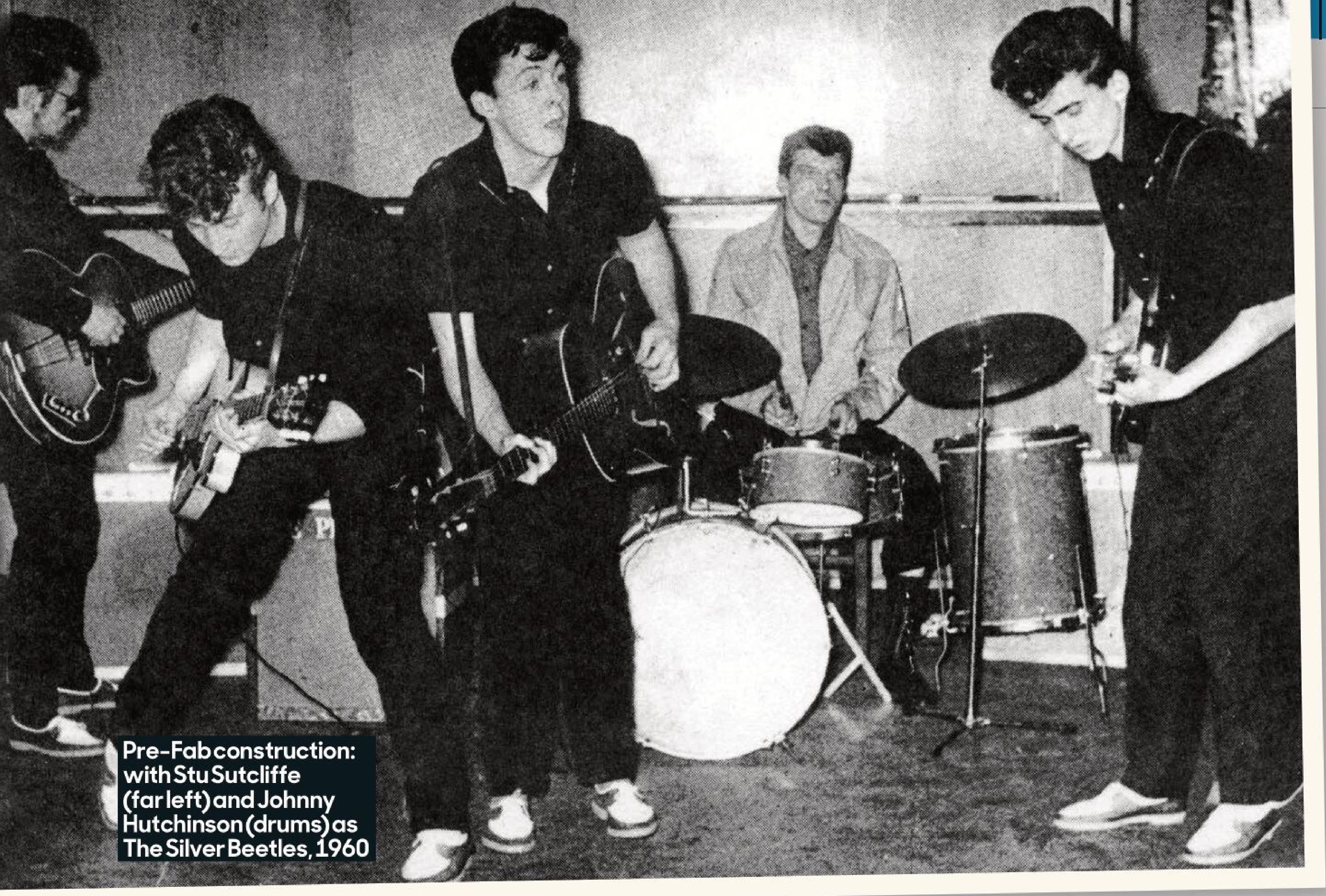
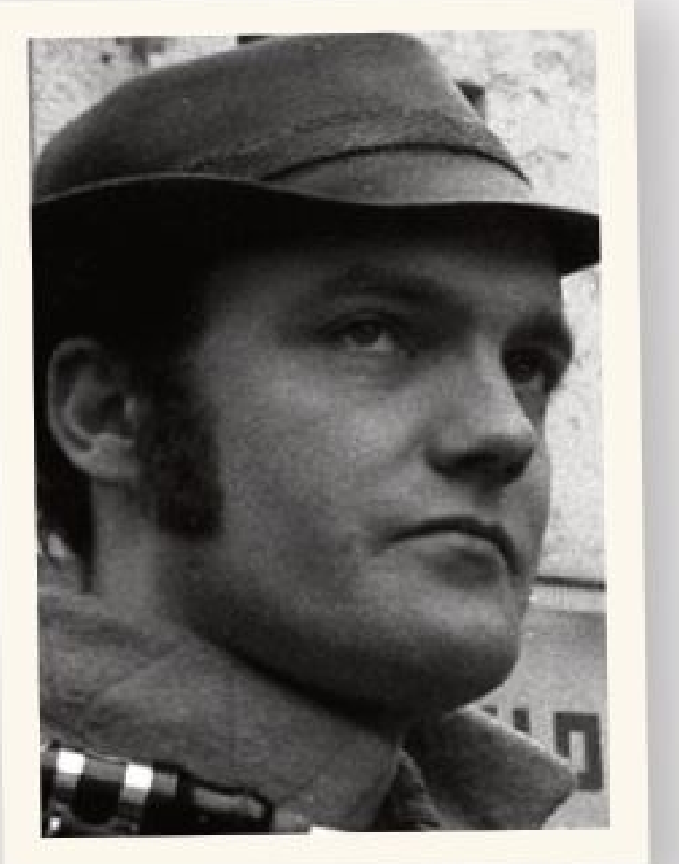

Pre-Fab construction: with Stu Sutcliffe (far left) and Johnny Hutchinson (drums) as The Silver Beetles, 1960

'THEY'D BEEN WOODSHEDDING'

SAXOPHONIST **HOWIE CASEY** ON HIS JOURNEY FROM THE BEATLES TO WINGS



"THE first time I ever saw Paul was when The Silver Beetles auditioned for Larry Parnes [*May 1960 at the Wyvern Social Club, Liverpool*], who didn't think much of them. I was in The Seniors, one of the first rock bands to play at the Cavern. They didn't have a drummer, so they got Johnny Hutchinson from The Big Three to sit in with them. And dare I say it, he made them sound much better than they were. They were nervous. Billy Fury was sitting there watching as well, with his shirt collar up, doing his best Elvis.

"After that, we saw them in Hamburg, where we'd already been playing for a while, and they *had* improved. They'd been woodshedding, getting it together. It was only a little bar, full of pissed Germans. The Beatles used to finish about one in the morning and then come down the Kaiserkeller and have a few drinks with us. Then we'd all get up and jam.

"In the early '70s I worked a lot with Tony Visconti, doing sessions for people like Marc Bolan. Then he became involved with *Band On The Run* [*Visconti was orchestrator*]. Paul knew me from Liverpool and through that I was offered the gig with Wings. We went in and did three tunes: 'Jet', 'Bluebird' and 'Mrs Vandebilt'. A few weeks later I got the call from Paul, who'd decided to add a new horn section on tour. He asked me to play sax. We did all the tours and albums with that horn section, then sadly it all came to an end after Japan, when he was nicked. The last album I played on was *Back To The Egg*. I'm 84 now and still playing. In fact, one of the bands I have now is called Beatles With Wings."

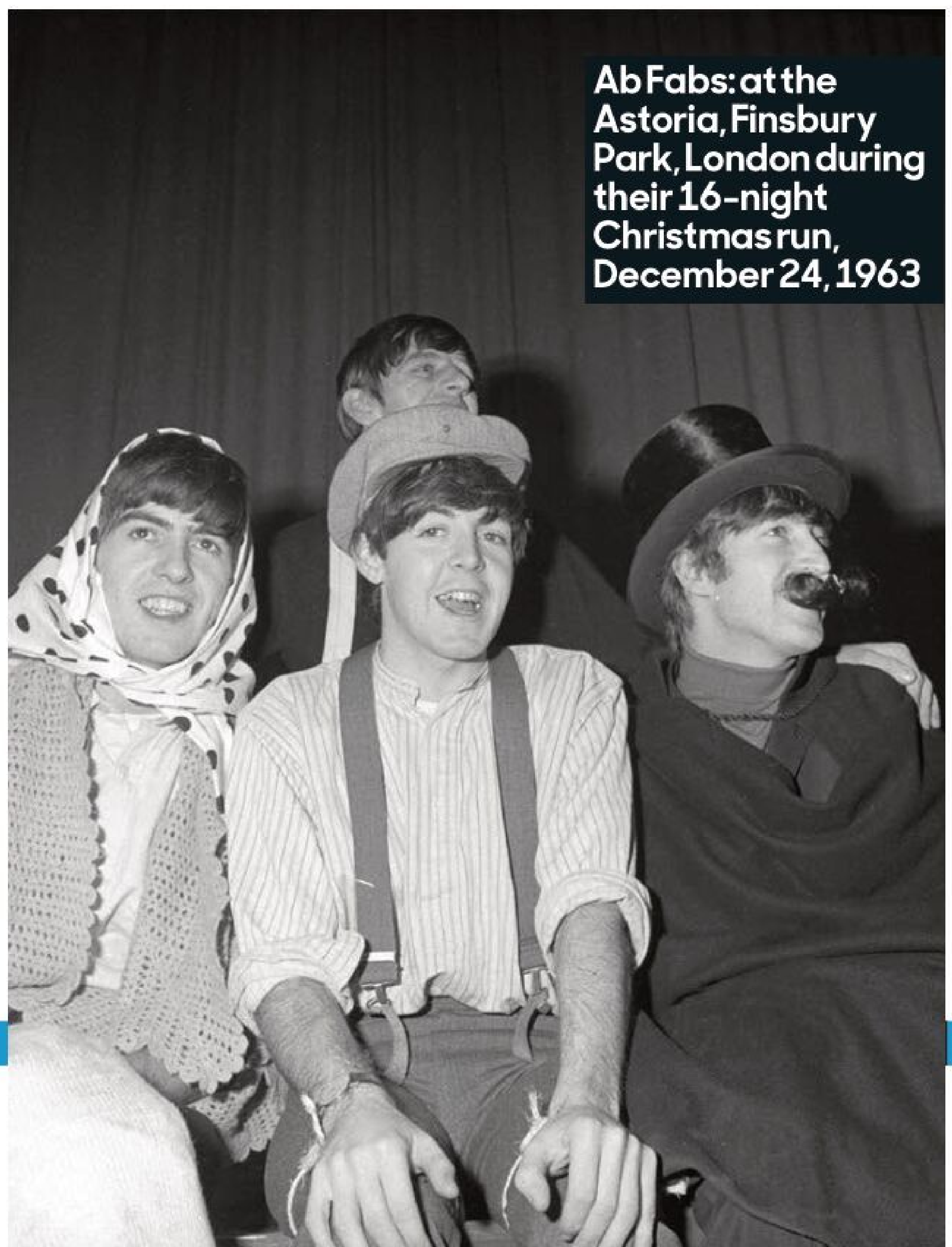
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES, JEFF HOCHBERG/GETTY IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

How was it to direct Paul? I think the problem with Paul is he's so enthusiastic towards cinema, art, what's going on, that it got in the way. Sometimes he tried harder than he should have. I remember that all during the shooting of *Help!*, Paul was writing "Yesterday" under the title of "Scrambled Eggs". At one point, I got so annoyed with him sitting at the piano he had on stage that I said: "If you don't finish that song or forget it, I'm going to have them take the piano away, 'cause I can't stand any more of it."

"PAUL ALWAYS HAD A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOUR"
JACKIE DESHANNON

"Funniest of the four"

JACKIE DESHANNON: When I supported The Beatles on their first American tour in 1964, the opening acts sometimes went out to eat together before the show. At one of the stops, me and my band got back to the theatre shortly before show time, but the guard didn't recognise us and wouldn't let us inside. We gave him a note to take to Paul in the dressing room, letting him know that The Beatles would have to go on stage early and perform for a full hour, instead of their usual 29 minutes, since there would be no opening acts. Needless to say, the guard soon let us in. Paul always had a great sense of humour and was the funniest of the four. Plus, the refreshing thing is that – like Elvis – Paul and all of the other Beatles behaved like nice, regular lads. It was a glorious, crazy and amazing experience. Getting to sing three songs in the first act before The Beatles went on was such a great thrill. I was so fortunate to experience Paul's warmth and kindness to me on that tour.


Ab Fabs: at the Astoria, Finsbury Park, London during their 16-night Christmas run, December 24, 1963

"A false beard as disguise"

PATTIE BOYD: I've known Paul for the best part of 60 years. There are many stories. When asked, I always think that its best to go with the one that springs to mind quickly, so here goes. George and Ringo were sharing a flat in Whaddon House, situated in a mews in Knightsbridge, at the height of Beatlemania in 1964. I also lived there for a time with George and Ringo, before moving out to Esher. I was there one time with Maureen [*Ringo's wife*] when we heard a loud knocking on the door. I opened the door very slightly to see what the commotion was about and a bearded guy who I didn't recognise tried to push his way in. I leant against the door to try to keep him out, getting a bit scared by now as he just kept shouting, "Let me in! Let me in quick!" It was only after he followed one of these desperate pleas with, "It's me, it's Paul!" that I realised it was actually Paul, who'd been trying to evade the fans by donning a false beard as a disguise. Pretty good it was, too. I let him in and he was saved.

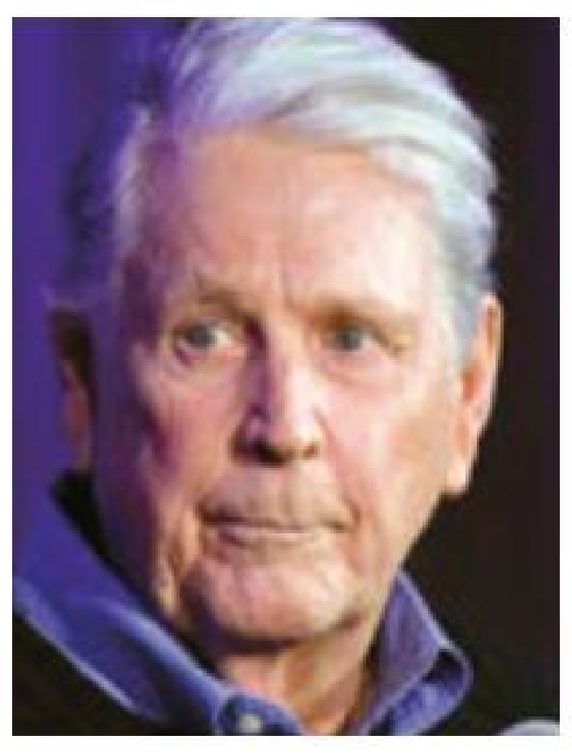
"Head down in the sink"

LULU: I first met The Beatles at the Hammersmith Odeon, when they were doing a Christmas show. I managed to get backstage and there's a picture of me, sitting between John and Paul. I must be 16 and I'm looking at Paul with the face of a cat that got the cream. The dressing room was really a pigsty. It smelled of cheap disinfectant and there was a grubby little sink in the corner. There's Paul washing his hair, with his head down in the sink. I thought, 'How great is their hair?' We ended up living very close to each other in St John's Wood and bumped into each other a lot. I'd see him out walking with Martha, his big sheepdog, often with Jane Asher. Or he'd pop into my flat if I had a drinks party. If he got hold of a piece of information, he would tease me relentlessly. I liked Eric Clapton. We'd be somewhere and all of a sudden – because Paul's got a good poker face – he'd just come out with it: "Seen Eric recently?" Or, "How's Eric?" I'd say to him every time: "I don't know who you're talking about!" It was

Indian winter: in Rishikesh with the Maharishi, February 1968

like a big brother trying to irritate his little sister.

"He was crying"

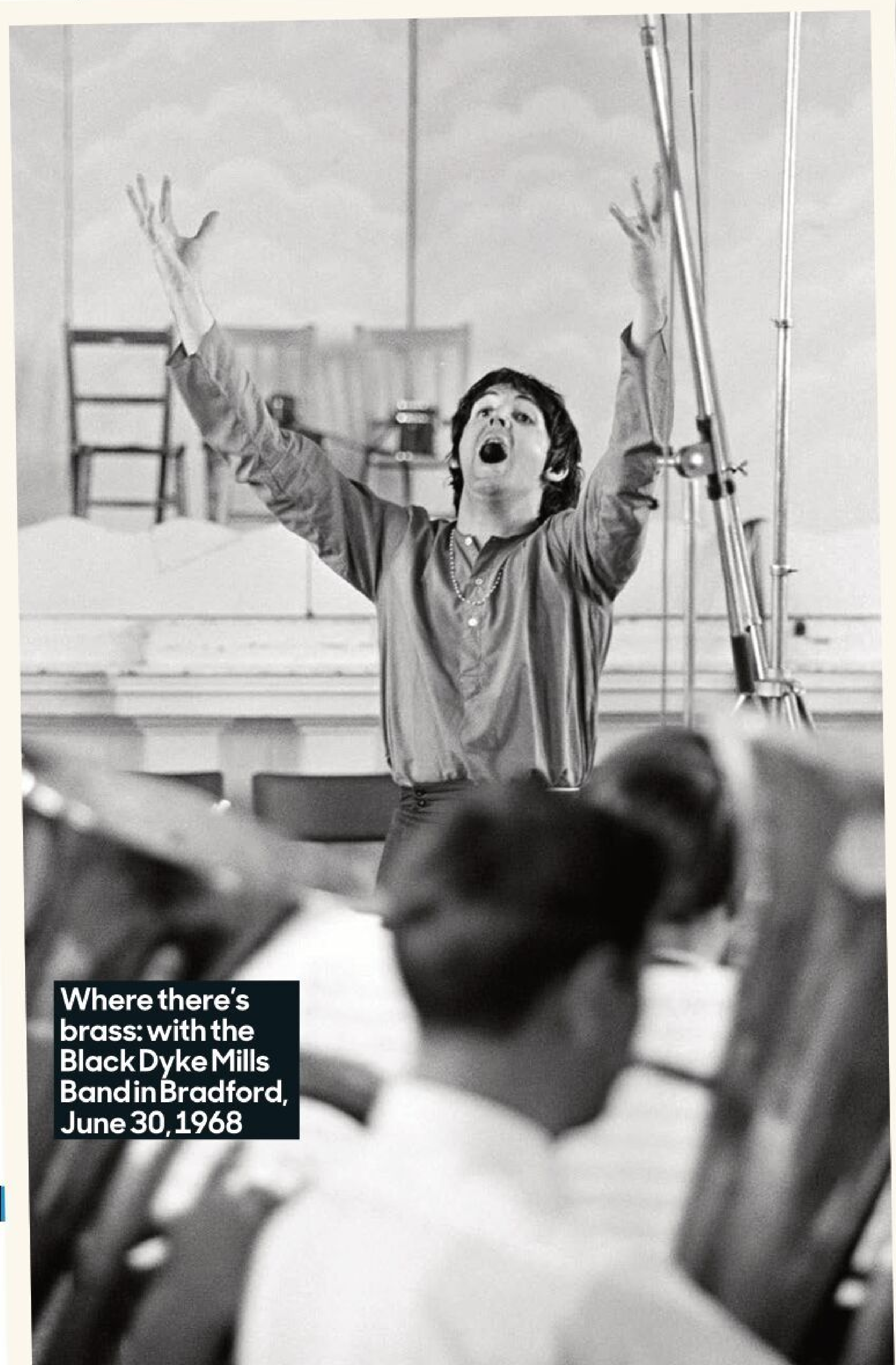


BRIAN WILSON: I admired Paul very much in the '60s. It wasn't really a rivalry between The Beach Boys and The Beatles, it was just that we inspired each other very much. Paul's probably the most prolific songwriter in the history of the business. He's such a great guy, he always means well. I first met him in 1967, in a recording studio in Los Angeles. He sat down at the piano and played "She's Leaving Home" for me and my wife. It was so beautiful that we both just cried. We didn't really stay in touch over the years, but when we met in 2004, he'd come to watch the *SMiLE* concert in England. I was told that he was crying. I'd never really considered writing a song with Paul, but it's something I might still pursue. His concerts are just fantastic. I've been to three or four of them, and every time I go I like him even more. My favourite Paul McCartney moment? I really loved *Let It Be*. I couldn't believe how great that album sounded. I think "The Long And Winding Road" [*sings the chorus*] is just so beautiful.

"Traffic just stopped to watch"

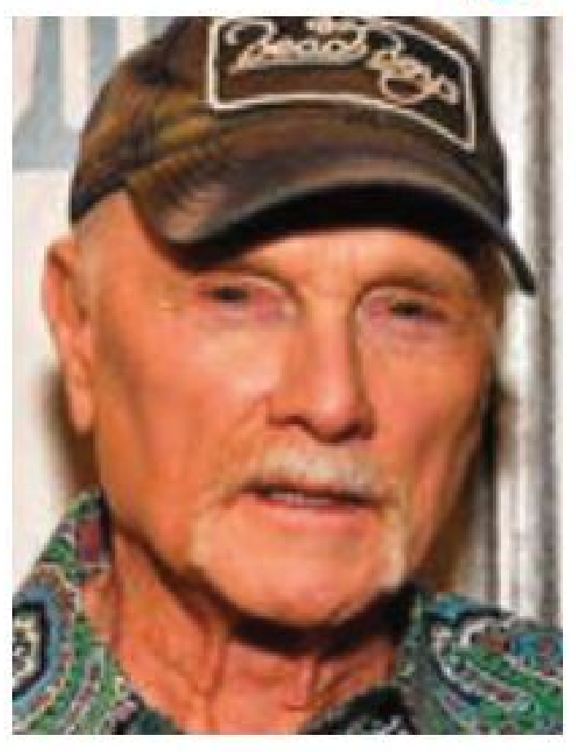
FREDA KELLY, Fan Club Secretary: I started off working for Brian Epstein in Liverpool, then became secretary of The Beatles' fan club. Paul was the one who always wanted to get things done, whereas the other Beatles didn't have that same push. If ever there was a problem, Paul spoke up. When Eppy died, Mike [*McCartney*] told me that Paul had plans to do this *Magical Mystery Tour* and film. I don't think he was planning on doing it that early, because it was only a month after Brian had passed away. But I think he wanted to bring it forward to keep us all together, to keep everyone occupied. I remember us all setting off from outside Madame Tussauds and this line of traffic just stopping to watch the coach, because they'd seen Paul in the front. I didn't go to London often, but when I did I'd stay with Ringo and Mo [*Maureen Starkey*] and go to clubs with The Beatles. Me and Paul were once photographed coming out of a nightclub together, either the Ad Lib or the Bag O' Nails. Paul comes out and he's startled, while I'm trying to hide behind him. The following week we found ourselves on the back page of the *NME*. The headline was something like, "Paul McCartney Denies Marrying Freda!" We thought it was hilarious.

"IN THE PUB HE PLAYS 'HEY JUDE', ONLY JUST WRITTEN!"
TONY BRAMWELL



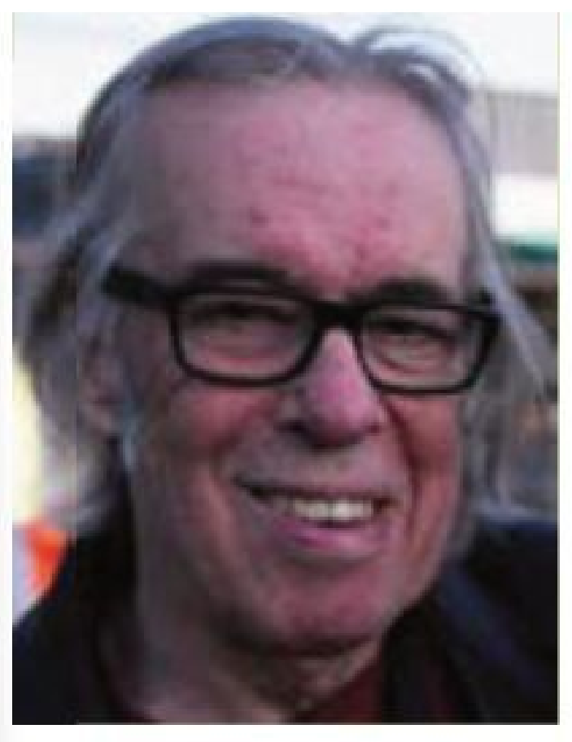
Where there's brass: with the Black Dyke Mills Band in Bradford, June 30, 1968

"In India, overlooking the Ganges"



MIKE LOVE: Hanging out with The Beatles in Rishikesh, in 1968, was so inspiring. There was a lot of music and a lot of meditation. One morning, Paul came down to the breakfast table with his acoustic guitar and said, "Listen to this, Mike": [*sings*] "*Flew in from Miami Beach B.O.A.C./Didn't get to bed last night…*" Musically, he was kind of paraphrasing "Fun Fun Fun", our song. He didn't have a bridge yet, so I said, "Paul, you've got to talk about all the girls around Russia – Georgia on my mind, Ukraine girls, all that kind of thing." It turns out that Sir Paul can craft a tune pretty handily. It was a morning in India, overlooking the Ganges, and here's Paul McCartney and Mike Love by themselves at the breakfast table. Pretty amazing. We each loved each other's music, that's for sure. Nobody's been kinder than Paul McCartney when it comes to *Pet Sounds*, and "God Only Knows" specifically.

"Tea and sandwiches"



TONY BRAMWELL, Apple Exec: One weekend we went up to Yorkshire to record the Black Dyke Mills Band [*June 1968*]. There was me, Paul, Derek Taylor, Peter Asher and Martha the dog, all piled into one car, with a picnic hamper. On the Sunday we recorded "Thingumybob" and "Yellow Submarine" out in Saltaire, then started driving back to London. Paul looks at the map and says: "There's a village here called Harrold. Let's stop and have afternoon tea." But nothing was open. We were wandering around and saw this guy cutting his hedge. Paul went over and asked if there was anywhere to get something to eat. The guy recognised him and said: "Come in! My wife will make you tea."

So we go into his house and have tea and sandwiches with his family. Paul picks up a guitar and starts singing to the kids. By the time the pub's open – probably seven o'clock – we go down there with this family.

Suddenly, everyone knows that Paul McCartney is in the village, so the pub

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Take five: recording the 'White Album' with George Martin in 1968

© PAUL McCARTNEY/ PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA McCARTNEY; DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS

gets full very quickly. Paul gets on the piano, singing "Roll Out The Barrel" and "Knees Up Mother Brown". Then he plays "Hey Jude", which he's only just written. This is the week before it was recorded. It was just magical.

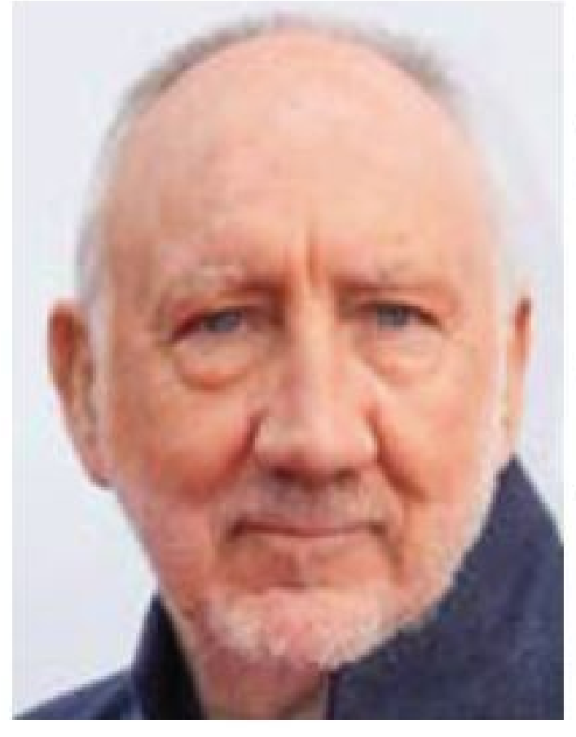
"We were rocking"

RINGO STARR: [*During the 'White Album' sessions*] I went over to John's and said, "I'm not playing great and you three are so close…" And he said, "I thought it was you three!" And then I went over to Paul's – knock! knock! knock! – I said, "I don't feel I'm playing good. And you three are so close…" And he goes: "I thought it was you three!" So I said, "Fuck it, it's too crazy! I'm leaving!" So I left, I got on a plane, I took Maureen and my two kids at the time and I went to Sardinia. There were all these faxes: "Come on back, it's great!" And when I did get back, George had the whole studio decorated in flowers, so it was a beautiful reunion. I think that broke the spell and we all realised, "Let's get back together." But I did love the 'White Album'. We were like a band again. A lot of tracks were just this band, the band I love. The 'White Album', we were rocking.

the 1970s

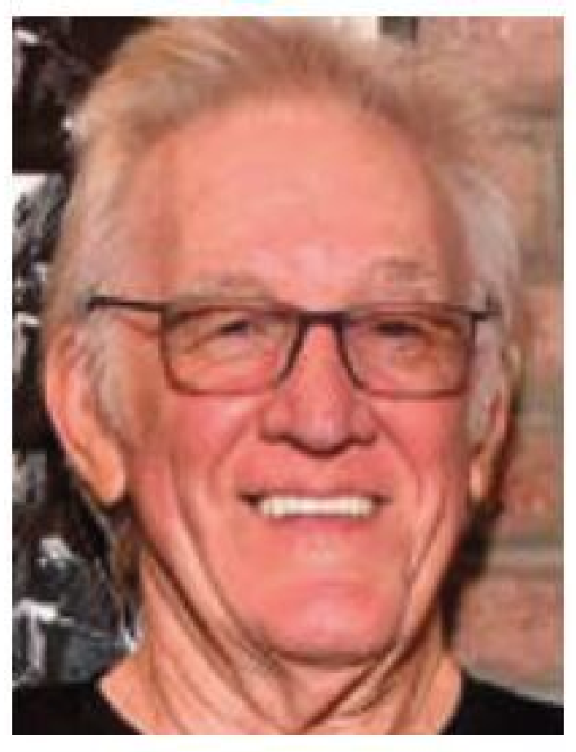
THERE is an audition in a basement, some useful advice gifted to an upcoming musician, some surprising developments in "punk rockabilly" and we discover McCartney does not hold a grudge

"He called, really energised"



PETE TOWNSHEND: Do you know the story about Paul's first solo album? I was working on my first solo album, *Who Came First*, at Olympic. He was in the studio doing something as well and came in to listen to the whole album. Paul said: "How did you do this?" I said that I recorded it at home. I said, "I've got a little mixing desk and an eight-track tape machine." He went, "Fuck! And you did it yourself?" I said, "Yeah, *you* should do it." We had a couple of phone calls subsequently and then he called up one day, really energised, and said, "The guys from Abbey Road have delivered an eight-track tape machine to my house in St John's Wood and I've started." So he made that first album with it [*McCartney*]. That's how Paul started. Now he's got this big SSL studio in his house in Sussex, he can do whatever the fuck he likes!

"Explore the accident"



DENNY SEIWELL, Wings drummer: My audition for what became Wings was in a brownstone building in New York that didn't look like it even had electricity. It was just a dirt floor basement with a set of drums. Paul and Linda were sat in the corner on folding chairs. I said: "Hey, you're Paul McCartney!" He said, "Yeah, I know. Would you mind just playing some drums for me?" I said, "Sure, but do you have a bass or guitar so we can play together?" He went, "Nah, just you." I said the line that probably got me the gig: "Well, I guess if you can't get it on by yourself, you can't get it on with somebody else." I think he liked that. We kidded around a little bit and it was fun. I did my best Ringo. Three or four days later he called me up: "Hello, this is Paul. I want to hire you." Fantastic! The great thing about Wings is that he didn't force *anything*, it just happened. Paul wasn't a perfectionist. He'd say:

Coast stars: on Plymouth Hoe, filming *Magical Mystery Tour*, September 1967

Wings, November 25, 1979: (l-r) Denny Laine, Steve Holly, Paul, Linda and Laurence Juber

"Let's explore the accident rather than fix the mistake." It was part and parcel of what he was as an innate musician. You can't buy what he had, he was just born with it.

"He suggested we stop fucking about"

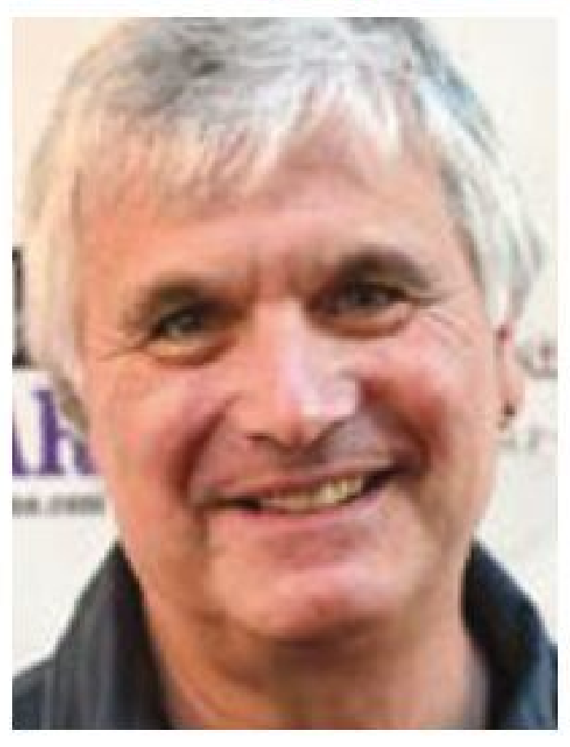
NICK LOWE: In 1973, Paul invited our band, Brinsley Schwarz, to open for Wings on their first UK tour. At the time we were trying to learn a song by The Crickets called "Please Don't Ever Change". It's a catchy tune but not straightforward. It was probably a bit ambitious for us back then. Nevertheless, we burnt a lot of our allotted soundcheck time wrestling the song's tricky harmonies and fancy chords into something we hoped would please the larger crowds. Unsettlingly, at first anyway, Paul would occasionally sit out front in the empty theatre, listening to our efforts. One evening, after about a week of this, he stopped me in the corridor. He asked if I knew that one live performance was worth two days' rehearsal. I said I did (I didn't). He then suggested we stop fucking about and do the tune that night. I whinged about how we could play it and we could sing it, but doing both at the same time was a bit of a stretch. Then he said: "We used to do that song..." – I presumed by 'we' he meant The Beatles – "...so I know what you mean. But whenever this kind of problem cropped up with us, we had a little trick you could try: stand at the back until just before you've got to start singing, then *run* up to the microphone and give it whatever you've got. It might still sound like shit, but it looks so cool that no one'll notice." We followed his advice. It worked a treat that night, and I've been doing it ever since.

> "YOU CAN'T BUY WHAT HE HAD, HE WAS BORN WITH IT"
> DENNY SEIWELL

"They're terrors, aren't they?"

MICHAEL LINDSAY-HOGG, Director: I went over to his house on Cavendish Avenue one afternoon in 1978 to discuss a video we were going to do for Wings. Paul got a business call he had to take. "Why don't you go out in the garden," he said, "and play with the girls." It was a nice day and I thought, Why not?' "Hi", I said. "Your Dad said I should come out and maybe we can play a game." Eight- or nine-year-old Mary, and six- or seven-year-old Stella, looked at me and then began to whisper. "OK," said Stella, taking me by the hand and leading me to an oak tree in the garden. "You stand by the tree." "What game are we going to play?" I asked. "Tie up", called Mary. "OK, put your hands behind you so I can tie them to the tree." Mary tied quite a good knot, then she and Stella moved further down the garden to play another game, without me this time. After a while, I couldn't see them anymore. A couple of minutes later, Paul and Linda came out. Their laugh was affectionate. Paul went round to untie me, saying: "They're terrors, aren't they?" "Not really," I replied. "They said the game is called 'Tie Up'. I should've guessed." "That's not its real name, though", said Linda. "No," said Paul, finally getting the knot undone. "It's called 'Get The Guest'."

"A higher energy"



LAURENCE JUBER, Wings Guitarist: In July 1978, our new lineup of Wings were recording at the McCartney farm in Scotland. One can imagine that such a bucolic

'FOR SURVIVING IT ALL'

EXCLUSIVE! Donovan has written us a birthday poem for Paul

DONOVAN and McCartney go way back. Having recruited Paul to whoop it up on 1967's "Mellow Yellow", Donovan was also part of the Rishikesh gathering that studied under the Maharishi in February 1968. While there, he supposedly taught Lennon and McCartney a finger-picking guitar style gleaned from folk singer Mac MacLeod. Rather than share a favourite Macca tale, Donovan has instead proffered a specially written poem.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR PAUL!

Who would've thought you'd last this long
On a wee veggie burger an' a popular song

You 'ave to admit it was tuff a few times
But you kept yer smile with a few funny rhymes

Remember the days you were skifflin' about?
A whole world waitin' to Twist 'n' Shout

Even then you were 'Bossy Boots'
Soon in a band wearin' Nehru suits

Joking aside we gift you this Paul
Our poem to you for surviving it all

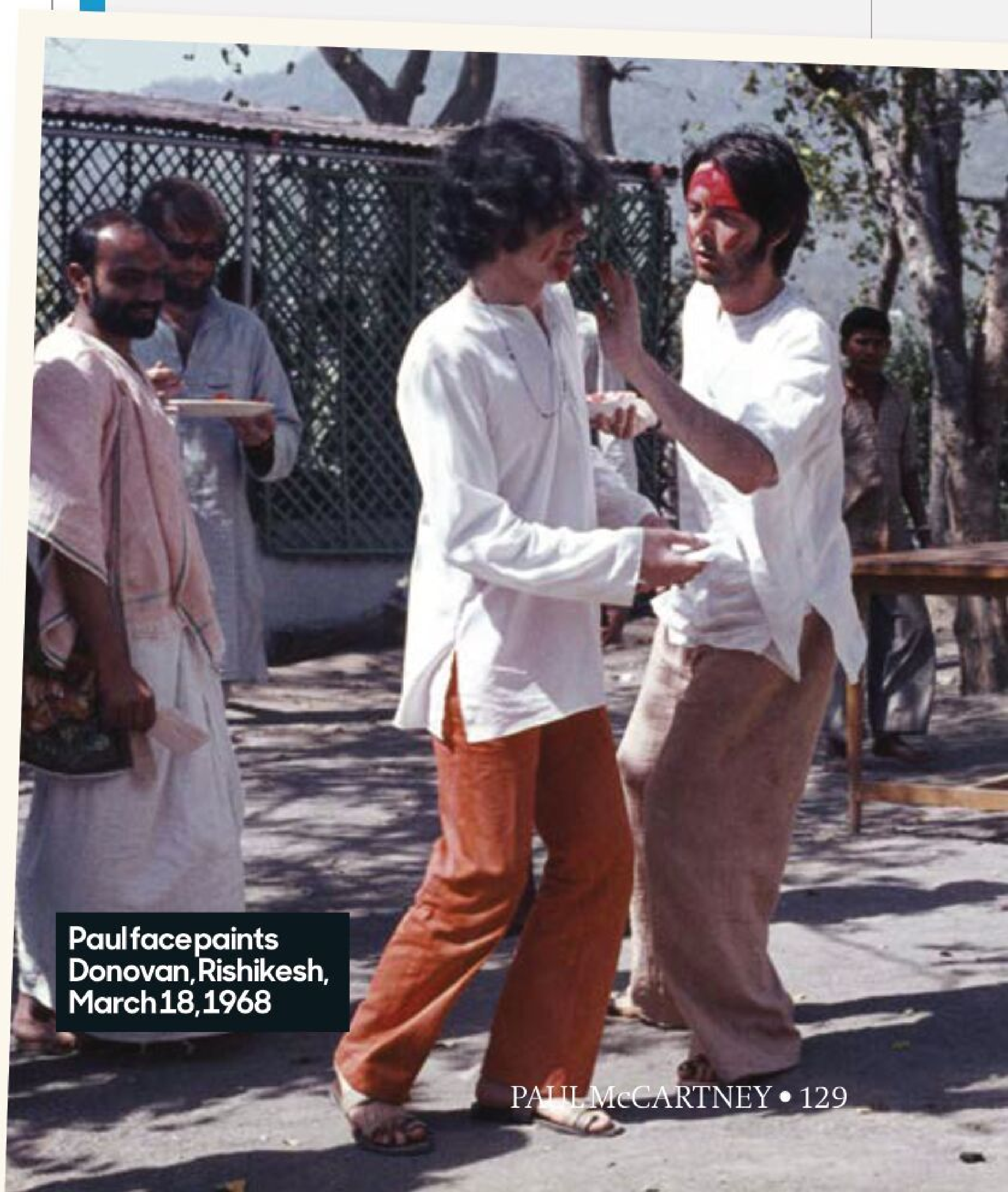
The mag just wanted a wee phone chat
Maestro Macca yer worth more than that

Keep on keeping on for when all's said and done
Of all your achievements for us there's just one

That shines a bright light and hope for us all
It's you're still around!
Happy Birthday Dear Paul!

Your Poetry Pals
DONOVAN & LINDA

ROLLS PRESS/POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES, EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES


Paul face paints Donovan, Rishikesh, March 18, 1968

environment would encourage folky ballads, but the project that became *Back To The Egg* was headed in a different direction. On this day we were recording "Spin It On", a high energy tune which I can best describe as 'punk rockabilly'. When it came to overdub my lead guitar solo, I sat next to Paul in the control room, Fender Stratocaster at the ready. Other producers had encouraged me to dig deep, but Paul's creative synergy brought a higher energy to the music-making, leading me into guitar phrases that weren't part of my "library o' licks". It was when I truly began to understand how his musicianship transcended the image of Beatle Paul. I've referred to my tenure with the band as like getting my masters from McCartney University.

"The fucking strap broke"

ROBERT PLANT: When we were doing the Concert For The People Of Kampuchea at Hammersmith Odeon in 1979, with this huge star-spangled band, he gave me his Hofner bass to wear. It's the beautiful bass, the one that we know from all the songs and photographs. I was miming away furiously when the fucking strap broke. I thought that was it. I was so close to getting on with this guy and then… It was great, it was very funny. I think the strap was ready to go anyway, but I know Bonzo [*John Bonham*], who was drumming behind me, was in stitches. What could you do that was really shit other than break The Beatles' bass? I have tremendous respect for Paul and the fact his work will never be over. Also that he didn't bear a grudge.

GETTY IMAGES

the 1980s

HORSE riding in the country, car journeys to the studio, "badass" rehearsals and "halcyon days"

"I need your knee!"

KENNEY JONES: Paul had been locked up in Japan [*January 1980*] and I'd recently got back from Cincinnati, where 11 people had died, tragically, at a Who show [*at Riverfront Coliseum on December 3, 1979*]. When he flew back into the UK he called and said, "Do you fancy coming up to ours in the country?" He and I and Linda used to ride horses together every now and then. Paul lived in Battle and we used to go and round up sheep, stuff like that. Anyway, this time we went out riding, then got talking over dinner. We both agreed that I wouldn't talk about Cincinnati and he wouldn't talk about Japan. But inevitably, we *did* talk about each other's experience of those things. He said to me, "I couldn't speak Japanese or understand anything about what was going on, but they gave me a number, which was 22. It's pronounced "nijuuni". The only way I could remember it was by thinking, "I need your knee!" At least he took something from that experience, but I still don't think it's his favourite number.

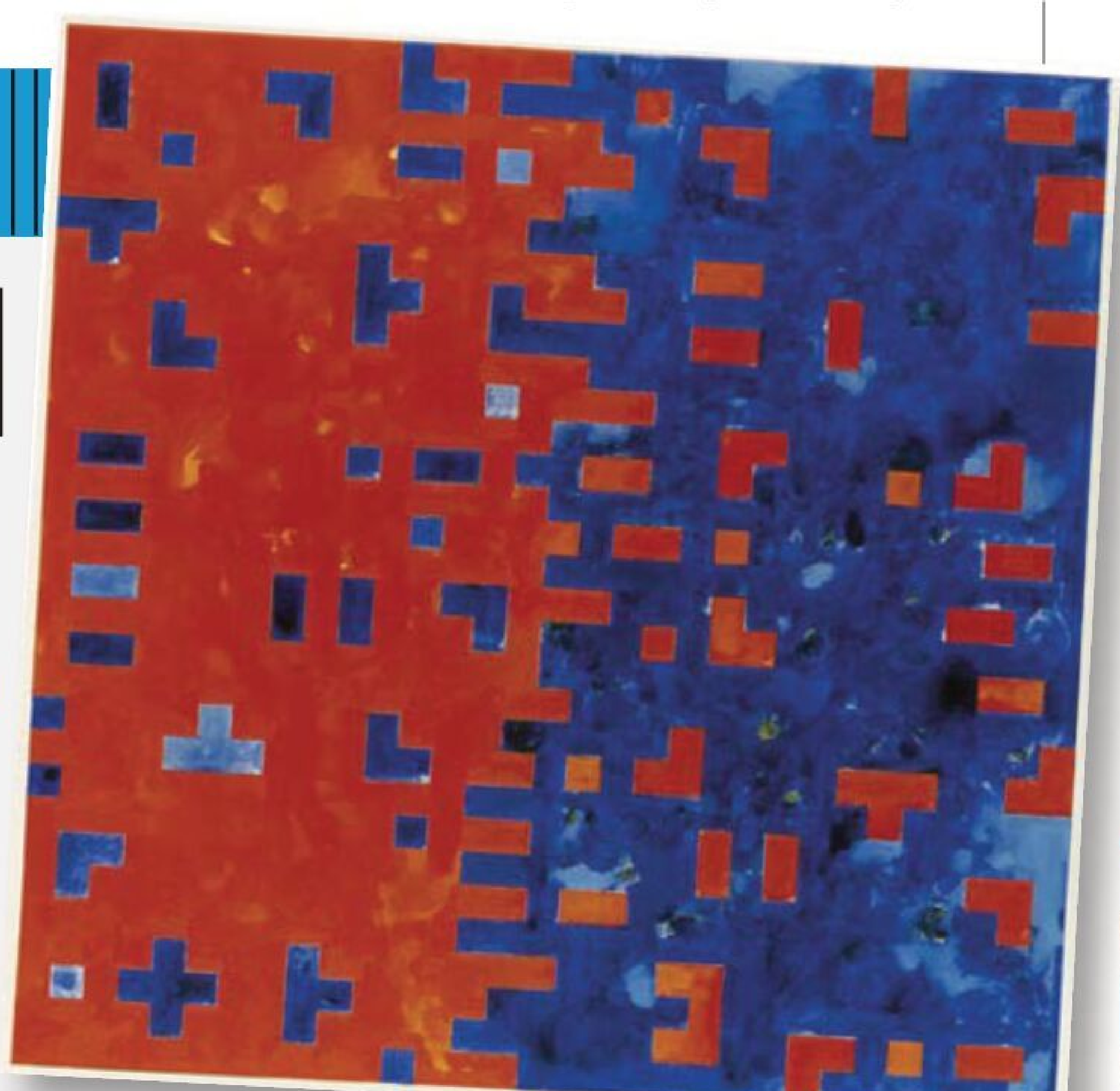
"He was like a goldfish"

GILES MARTIN: My dad [*George Martin*] wasn't really keen on me doing music for a living. It was partly to do with me maybe living in his shadow, but I also think he was nervous that I would be a bit crap. But Paul had a very different attitude. I remember being a teenager and Paul driving to the studio, probably when my dad was doing *Tug Of War* or *Pipes of Peace*, around 1983. There was just me and Paul in the car and he said: "Your dad says you're interested in music and you play the guitar. Are you writing songs?" "Yeah, I'm writing songs, but it's quite hard." And he went: "It *is* hard to write songs. I'm Paul McCartney and sometimes I find it hard to write a song. But you should keep on doing it." It was so sweet. To be fair, that's how he's been with me for pretty much my entire life. I did an album with Paul [*2013's New*] and each morning he'd come in and go: "Right, what are we going to do?" He was like a goldfish, it was like every day was so exciting. He's the least jaded person I know, the least cynical person about recording. Each time is like he's never done it before. That's why he keeps making albums.

"A cocky 17-year-old"

JOHNNY MARR: I played with him in 1987. It was in this rehearsal room in some industrial estate way out of town. He arrived and was friendly enough. But what always stayed with me was what happened when he put his bass on. His stance changed. He went over to his amp and he turned it right up. He started playing this enormous, incredible, thunderous but musical bass sound. The impression I got was someone who, once that instrument had gone on, it was all attitude, in the way that a cocky 17-year-old would have attitude. It wasn't cocky because he wrote all those songs, it was cocky because he knew he was a badass. He went on to prove that for the rest of the day. I noticed pretty quickly that if this guy – one of most famous men on the planet – was in any kind of pub in Glasgow or Liverpool or Manchester or Belfast on a Saturday night, around a lot of people, he could hold his own. What you saw in The Beatles as youngsters, where they could just take on anyone – the band as a gang! – he's still got it.

'I'D NEVER KNOWN PAUL SHOW OFF'



Celebrated painter and architectural artist Brian Clarke is a longtime collaborator. His work includes sleeves for *Tug Of War* and *Flowers In The Dirt*, plus elaborate stage sets for McCartney's world tours of the late '80s and early '90s.

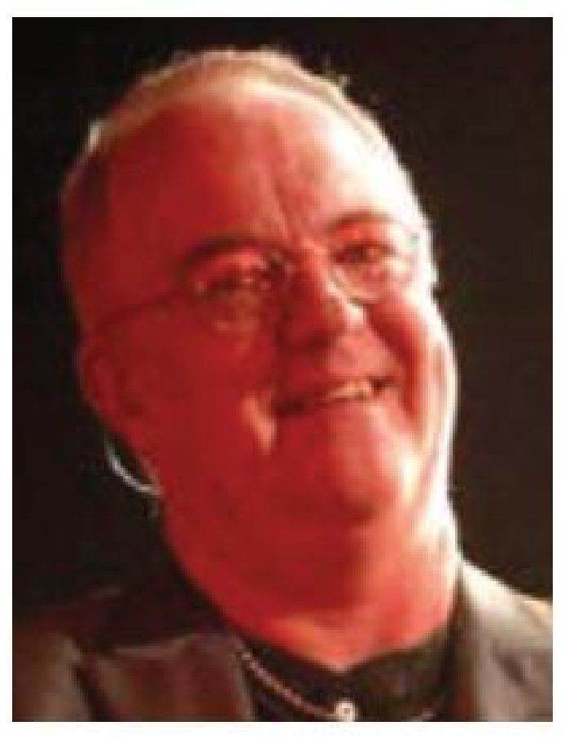
"PAUL and I met in the '70s through Robert Fraser, my art dealer. He actually introduced me to Linda first, who I got on really well with. One day Robert took me along to Air Studios in London, where Paul was recording. We probably smoked a spliff and just got chatting. I explained to Paul about the way you build up a painting, from a drawing through various layers of investigation until you land on something that's solid, that you can hold onto. Paul used all the words *I'd* use to describe the creation of a painting, in order to describe how you make music. When I went into Air that day, I met a Beatle. But I left the studio as a friend. We started seeing a lot of each other and continued to do so ever since.

"I've never known Paul show off. I have seen him on innumerable occasions make a real effort to close the gap between his celebrity and his wealth and other people. That's something that only decent and caring people bother to do. He's also one of the easiest people to work with, collaboratively. I designed the sets to a couple of his world tours. One set of designs I made down in Sussex at Hog Hill, while he and the band were rehearsing. I worked in this little kind of attic overlooking the studio, so I could hear the music at the same time. When I finally finished the drawings, we went through them and Paul said, 'Well, Bri, I'll be proud to turn my back on those!'

"You can't talk about Paul McCartney without talking about Linda and his family. Because it's all one thing. He's luckily found another great relationship with Nancy now. I've never really known anybody who's achieved the level of public success that Paul has achieved, where the importance of family has remained so paramount. I don't think Paul has pursued a relentless ambition to achieve in the way that a lot of very successful people do. I think he's achieved something much more unique: a personal relationship with his own instinct that very few people manage to arrive at. He believes in something other than things you can measure. Something beneath the surface."

Reunited front: with George and Ringo in 1995 working on the *Anthology* project

"Just two acoustic guitars"



ROBBIE McINTOSH, Guitarist: During the sessions for *Flowers In The Dirt*, I was in the control room, doing overdubs for "This One". Paul and I just started talking about "Blackbird". I'd always loved that song since I was 10 or 11 years old. I started playing it, but in a slightly cack-handed way, with a stretch, so he said: "Oh no, I play it like this." I watched him cross over the strings, thinking, 'Of *course* that's how you play it.' He was so open about it. Then when it came to *Unplugged* [*1991*], he got me to do "Blackbird" with him, just two acoustic guitars and Paul singing. That was a childhood dream come true. I'd grown up listening to The Beatles.

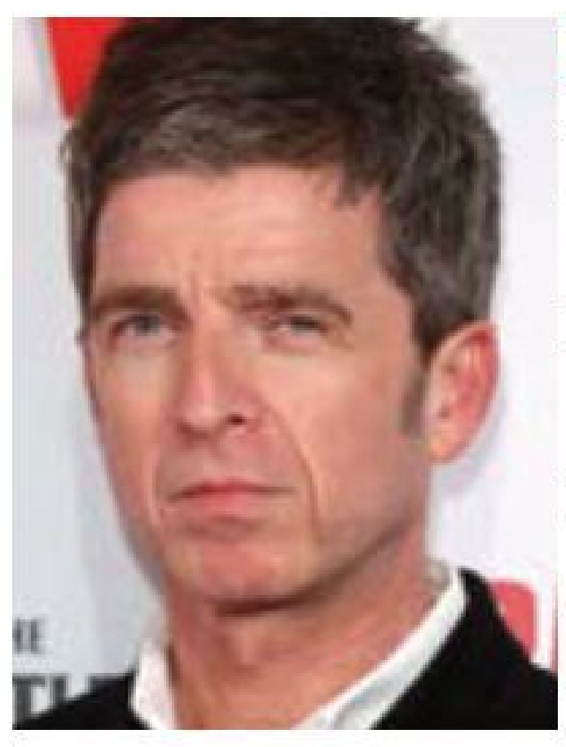
the 1990s

THERE are lava lamps and incense, a Magritte and a meditation bubble; John is here and on cassette; "Morning, la!"

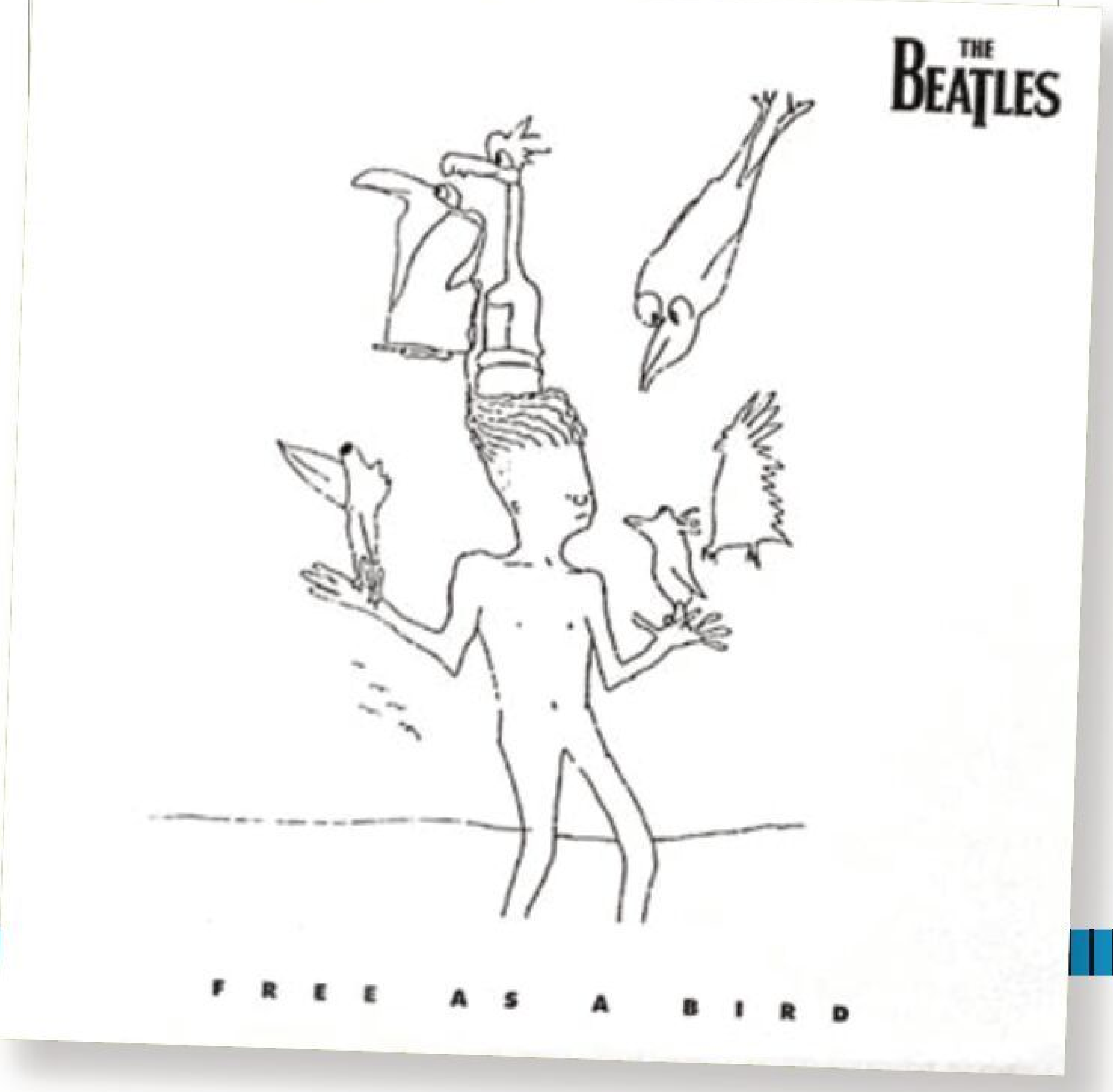
"Eddie Murphy's jaw hit the floor"

HAMISH STUART, Guitarist: We were recording *Off The Ground* [*released in 1993*] when Paul got a call from Eddie Murphy, asking him to perform on a song called "Yeah", which had nothing but A-list singers and actors simply singing the word "yeah" to a rhythm track. Paul had agreed to listen to it, so as we waited for the visit from Eddie he outlined what he thought would be a good gag. We'd been working on "Cosmically Conscious", which dated back to The Beatles' visit to Rishikesh. It had a simple hypnotic groove with reverb and was sonically a little more "out there". Paul's idea was that when Eddie arrived we'd all be sitting in the control room with lava lamps and incense burning, some wearing beads and long wigs. Paul would greet Eddie at the door – "Yeah, man" – and usher him into the control room, as we nodded our heads along with the track, some cross-legged on the floor or draped around the furniture. Eddie's jaw hit the floor as he tried to figure what was happening. After a few seconds he twigged and did that thing that he does with the big grin, wagging his finger and doing that unmistakable laugh. I'll never forget the initial look on his face. It was priceless.

"This white furry bed"



NOEL GALLAGHER: I first met him in '94, just after *Definitely Maybe* had come out. I was in my bedsit in Camden and got a call from Stella, who I already knew, saying: "We're having a party. Do you want to come around?" I jumped in a taxi to Cavendish Avenue and Twiggy answered the door. I'm wearing a brown suede jacket, a *Rubber Soul* kind of thing, and it hadn't dawned on me that Paul was going to be there. We go in and the jukebox in the front room is playing Desmond Dekker's "Israelites", and there's Paul skanking away with Linda. I went over and he said, "Hello Noel, you look like a Beatle." One of my best lines ever, which I've dined out on for years now, was me saying, "So do you!" He told me how much he liked "Slide Away". Then, later that night, he comes over and goes: "C'mon, I'll show you this thing I've got down the bottom of the garden." So he took us outside, where they've got the big meditation bubble. We get in it, press a button and this white furry bed just descends into this black bubble in the back garden. And he's going: "Great, isn't it? We used to come here in the '60s." He was showing us round the house and in some of the rooms the white wallpaper was all painted in. He said, "Oh, we used to be in here in the '60s, tripping, and just get the paints out." I woke up the next day and thought: 'Fucking hell, I'm going to ruin our kid's week with this!'



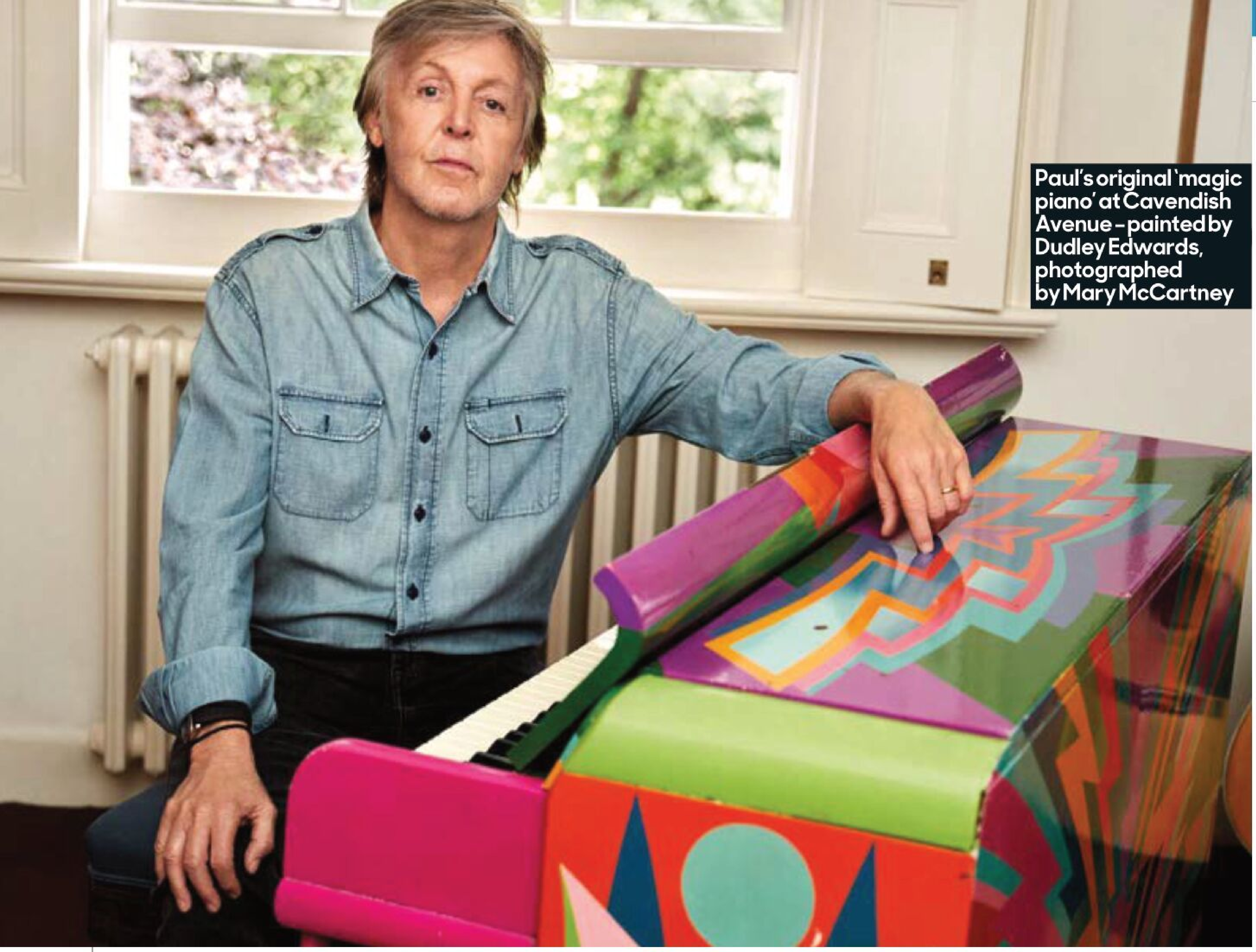
"Magazines in the loo"

YOUTH: When Paul and I were working together as The Fireman I asked him: "Who's the coolest guy you've ever met?" Of course, he's met everyone. He said [*art dealer*] Robert Fraser. I was like, "Wow. I know he's cool, but the coolest?" He said, "Oh yeah." Paul collects Magritte paintings. One of the lovely things about his studio is that there was a stack of magazines in the loo. A lot of them were old Sotheby's catalogues. Anyway, Paul said, "Yeah, Robert knew Magritte's galleries in Paris. He knew that if he was ever there and something came up, he'd just get it for me and I'd do him right. One day I was in the garden, recording Mary Hopkin, and I'd just left the front door open, as you did in the '70s. When I came out there was a Magritte, leaning against the inside of the front door. I realised it must've been Robert and he didn't want to bother me." I went, "Yeah, that's *really* cool!"

"Invited into the club"

JEFF LYNNE: I first worked with Paul when we did "Free As A Bird" [*1995*] with George and Ringo, and John on cassette. We went into Paul's studio, sat around a table and they spent hours reminiscing. I heard all the stories as they really happened. I loved every minute of it. I just sat there taking it all in. It was like being invited into the club. Fantastic! Then we got right to work with Geoff Emerick and Jon Jacobs engineering. It took a few days to finish it off. At the end of the recording, Paul came into the studio and said, "Well done Jeff, you've done it." I'd just put John into the recording and coming from Paul that meant a lot. A couple of years later Paul asked if I would produce *Flaming Pie* with him and again we worked in his studio. Paul is a great drummer – and piano player and guitarist. I'd learn the chords to the song, and then we'd play guitars together, in harmony or doubling each other. Then came my favourite bit, singing the background vocals with Paul McCartney!

© PAUL McCARTNEY/ PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA McCARTNEY; GETTY IMAGES



Paul's original 'magic piano' at Cavendish Avenue – painted by Dudley Edwards, photographed by Mary McCartney

"This little face peeked in"

IAN PAICE: George was a good pal. I'd met Ringo, but I hadn't met Paul until I got an unexpected phone call from his office, asking if I'd like to play on what became *Run Devil Run* [*1999*]. I arrived at Abbey Road one Monday morning and set up, waiting for the great man to show. Everybody's looking to the front door, but of course he has this sneaky little way in through the back. So right behind my drums the door suddenly opened and this little face peeked in: "Morning la'!" It was a lot of fun. Like all The Beatles, he had that low, somewhat cynical Liverpool sense of humour. Very funny. We had five days in the studio and it was so refreshing, because we were just playing stuff that had influenced *him* back in the '50s. He had a big sheaf of papers and would go: "Let's try this one." We'd give it two or three runs and if it worked, that was the take. If it didn't, you threw the piece of paper on the floor and picked another one. He just loved being spontaneous.

the 2000s AND BEYOND

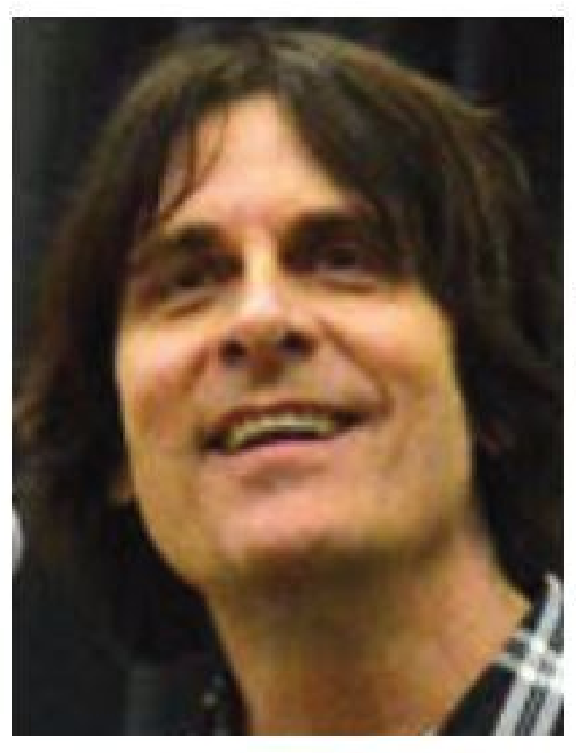
AN incident involving a piano; margaritas at Cavendish Avenue; a Beatles premier; "He's just as real now as when I first met him in the '60s…"

"Just the two of us"

GABE DIXON, Keyboards: In 2001, I played keyboards and sang background vocals in Paul McCartney's band. During the first half of the year, we recorded his album, *Driving Rain*. One evening, Paul had a scheduled benefit performance and wanted the studio band to join him. Since he'd been recording most of the new songs on his Hofner bass, he decided to play bass on the whole set, including on "The Long And Winding Road". I would be holding down the legendary piano part, and he wanted to show me how he played it. So the two of us walked into the studio's piano booth and shut the door behind us. "Y'know, no-one else has ever played piano on this with me, and I've never played bass while singing it either," he said. "This will be the first time." Afterwards, I asked him if there were any more songs he was thinking of recording. He said, "There's one I was working on the other night that might be a good one. Would you like to hear it?" So he played me "Driving Rain", trying to forget that I might be the first person to ever hear it. As the last notes rang out to the sound of my soft clapping, he said, "So what do you think?" I told him I loved it. The fact that an artist this great would ask the honest opinion of one 23-year-old speaks volumes about the man's humility and groundedness.

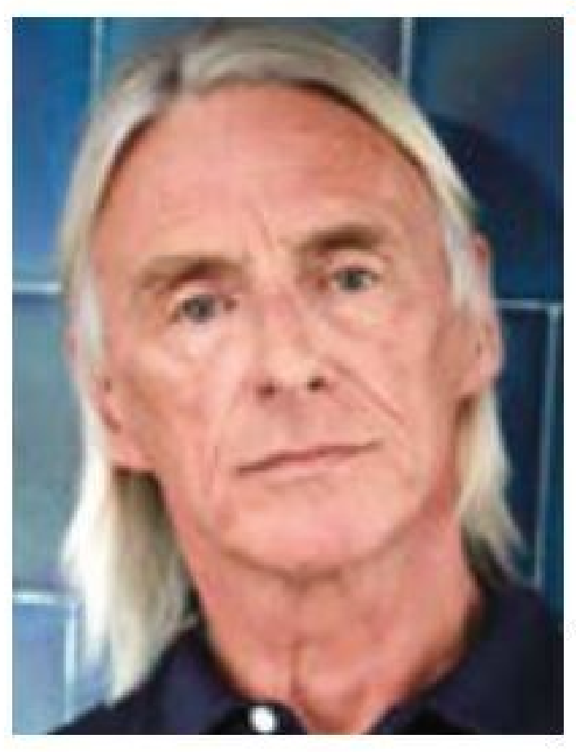
> "HE WAS TRYING TO HANG ONTO HIS SOUL"
> NITIN SAWHNEY

"Fell backwards into the hole"

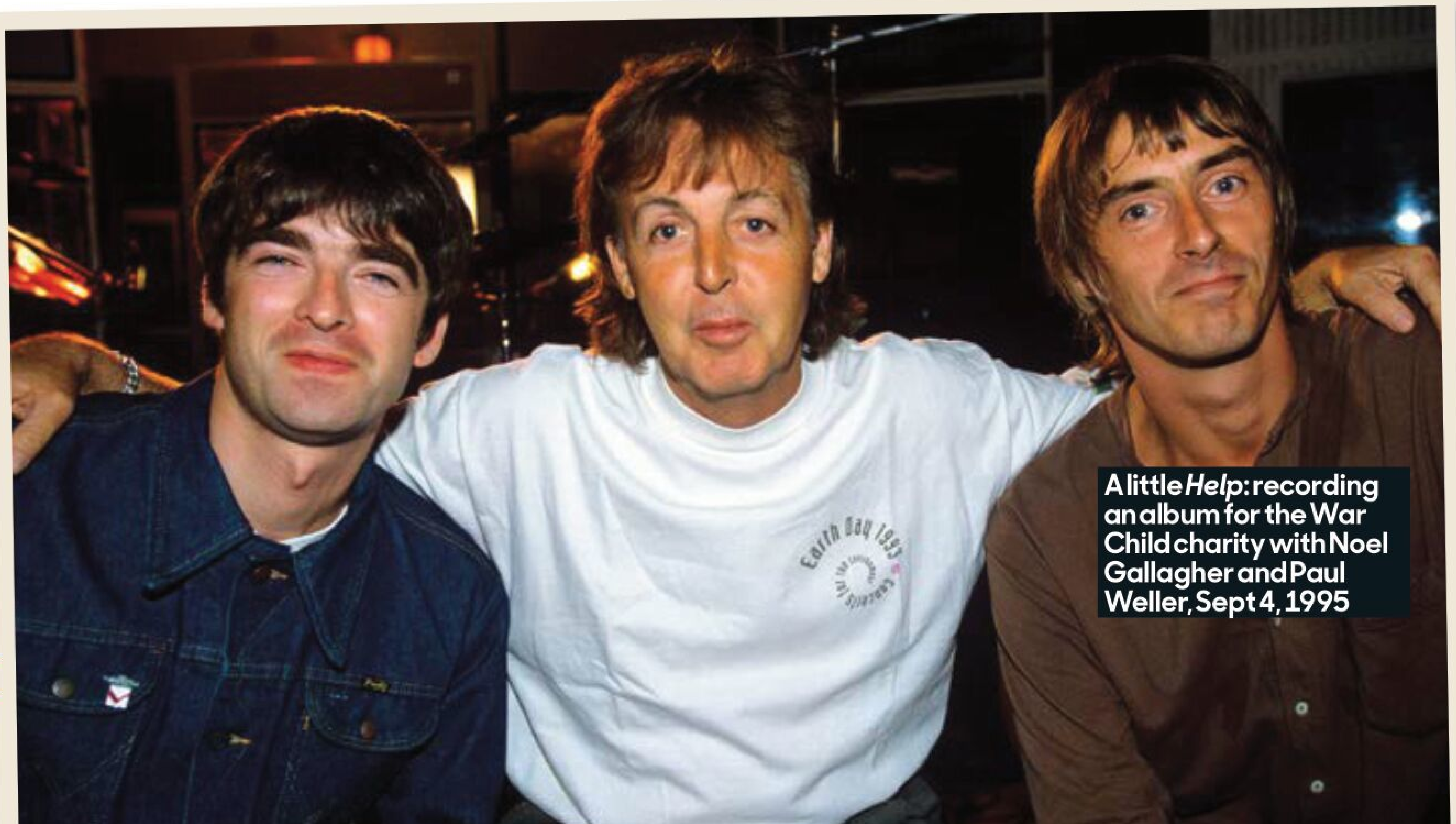


RUSTY ANDERSON, Guitarist: Touring America in 2005, Paul really wanted to have his piano in the middle of the stage. So production designed a way for it to sit under the stage and rise up only for the piano songs, then disappear for the rest of the time. I think it was at the second or third show of the tour and early in the set, when Paul was talking to the audience with his Hofner in hand, ready to switch to the piano. As planned, the stage floor opened up behind him as the piano just started to rise up. He then took a few steps back and fell backwards right into the hole and on top of the piano with his bass in hand. It was quite a drop. I thought to myself, "This is really, really bad!" He landed pretty much square on his back and the bass fell to the side as the piano rose up. He sort of gained his composure quickly, basically unscathed, and launched into the next song. I couldn't believe what just happened. The next day he was fine. No limp or sore back or anything. He must have fallen just right. The bass needed only a minor repair. Unbelievable!

"You all right, mate?"



PAUL WELLER: I first met Paul in 1981, at Air studios. The Jam were finishing *The Gift* and Paul was in the studio along from us, working on *Pipes Of Peace*. Him and George Martin and Linda were there. I was on the phone to someone when he came up to me and said, "You all right, mate?" I met Michael Jackson with him as well. Funny, the sort of people you meet in corridors. After that, we did War Child together in 1995 [*The Help Album*]. That was amazing – to be in Abbey Road No 2 studio, recording a cover of "Come Together". My favourite memory was when he invited me and [*wife*] Hannah to a summer party at Cavendish Avenue, about eight or 10 years ago. We ended up being the last ones there. Hannah, who perhaps doesn't have quite the same reverential feelings as I do, asked Paul if we could have a look at his music room. He took us up to the top floor and it was just me, Hannah and Paul. He sat at his upright piano. The room looked pretty much the same as I've seen in photos. He'd say, "I wrote 'Hey Jude' on this…" or "I remember sitting here with Mick Jagger listening to 'Ain't Too Proud To Beg' for the first time…" He talked about writing with John. So it was a very special moment. I felt very humbled.



A little *Help*: recording an album for the War Child charity with Noel Gallagher and Paul Weller, Sept 4, 1995

© MARY McCARTNEY, GETTY IMAGES

“A healthy push and pull”: with Nigel Godrich in 2005

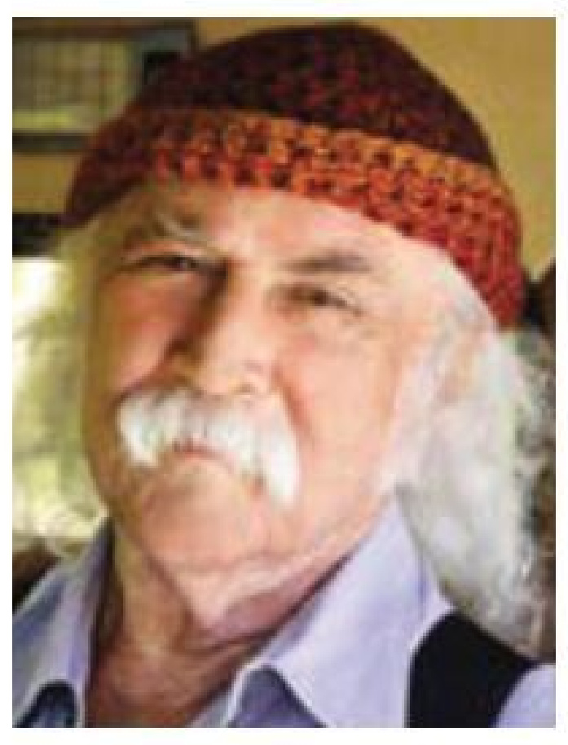
“An incredible margarita”

NITIN SAWHNEY: I’ve known Paul from the ’90s, when he first came round to my tiny shared flat in Tooting. I’d had a call that morning, saying that he wanted to see me at work on a remix. Straightaway, he walked in and said, “I used to write music in a room like this. I wrote a track called ‘Scrambled Eggs’. I’ll play it to you.” Of course, it was “Yesterday”. Then I went round to his place in North London a few times and to East Sussex, where he has a little cocktail bar outside and will make you an incredible margarita. Later on [*for 2008’s London Undersound*], we ended up writing a song together. He was definitely the easiest person I’ve ever collaborated with, yet he gave 100 per cent to that session, because he was really singing about his break-up [*from Heather Mills*] in some ways. But he was also singing about something else. At the beginning of the track he talked about how, in Africa, they have a belief that when they take a photograph of you, they’re stealing your soul. So he called it “My Soul”. It was because he felt that he was desperately trying to hang on to his soul, when the press would be constantly hounding him and trying to invade his privacy.

“President Obama’s final party”

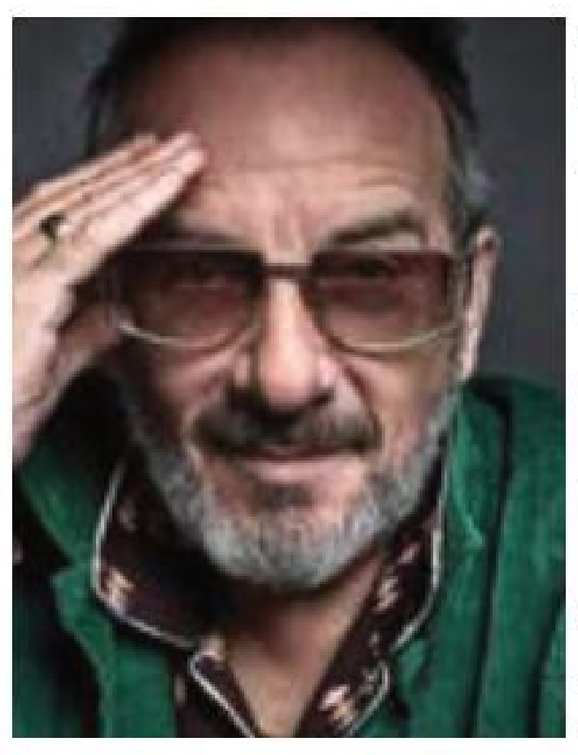
NILE RODGERS: I bought a Beatles songbook when I was a teenager. The very first song I ever learned to play on guitar was “A Day In The Life”. I first met Paul at President Obama’s final party, a couple of days before he left office. I looked from the stage out at the audience and I saw Paul had formed a dance circle and he’s dancing away and he’s singing the lyrics to [*Chic’s*] “I Want Your Love”. That was next-level surreal! We became friends. I live in New York – one block away from Yoko, in fact – and when Paul and I last spoke, a few months ago, I told him that right outside my window is the studio where John did Primal Scream therapy. He cracked up, because John had tried to get Paul into it. But, yeah, I see him often, now that I’m Chief Creative Advisor at Abbey Road. He’s such a gentleman!

“One pair of hands clapping”



DAVID CROSBY: Paul was kind to us from when The Byrds went over to England for the first time [*1965*]. They had us over to their houses, they’d invite us to parties. I remember McCartney drove me home in his Mini Cooper from a *horrible* gig somewhere in Soho. It was a terrible place – blood-smeared, bug-infested, hideous. And he went, “Ah, it’s not that bad. We’ve played there three or four times!” Anyway, two or three years ago I’m in this big rehearsal complex at Burbank. I’m doing a relatively new song, a pretty intense song. I’ve got my eyes closed, because I’m into it. It’s one of those moments when it’s going extremely well and you don’t want to fuck it up, even though it’s just you and the band in a big empty room. So I get to the end of the song and I hear one pair of hands clapping. I open my eyes, look up and it’s McCartney. He’s been standing there the whole time. He’s rehearsing in the room next door and has come over to see me. He invited us all back to his room, we raided his groceries and talked endlessly. He was so gracious with us. He’s just as real now as when I first met him in the ’60s.

“The real fucking deal”



ELVIS COSTELLO: When we were recording *Imperial Bedroom*, Linda ran into our studio, chasing Stella who was chasing James, who ran into our studio first! From that, we got to know one another. Then I got the call and wrote 15 songs with Paul McCartney – 15! – one of which we forgot about until they put the box- set out. I sat with him for a while at the party after the *Get Back* premiere, and he said to my missus, Diana, in the middle of it: “You remember when we made *Kisses On The Bottom* together?” She was MD on that. “You made stuff up, you made the intros up.” He was basically saying, ‘Like we did in that film’. For him to say that to her face, in the middle of this fucking Beatles party, what a compliment! *Kisses On The Bottom* is a record people don’t understand. It’s right from the heart. He’s singing songs about home, about growing up, about love. It’s the real fucking deal. All those songs we thought we were too hip to like. He’s meant so much, to so many people. I mean, he went to outer space for us.

INTERVIEWS: MICHAEL BONNER, ROB HUGHES, PETER WATTS

'HE'S A POLYMATH'

NIGEL GODRICH ON RECORDING *CHAOS AND CREATION*…

“A MEMORY from producing 2005’s *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*: Paul is standing on a chair behind me in the control room of Ocean Way Studio B, reciting Shakespeare, loudly. His violin bass is slung around his neck. He is smiling. He said he might have been an English teacher if the music thing didn’t work out, but I believe he could have done anything he wanted with his life. He’s very clever – one of the smartest guys I’ve ever met – a polymath. He could have been an intellectual or a scientist or maybe even a prime minister. But we got the musician.

“Working together on the record was a healthy push and pull. As with all things worthwhile it was extremely hard at times. He was very patient, even when the process was uncomfortable for both of us. Me: ‘You’re rushing…’ Paul: ‘Polish, actually…’ Haw-haw.

“I wanted to get him away from the influence of other players in the studio as much as possible. I wanted to make a record that was just the sound of him, and he understood and went with it. I got him to play the cello, the drums, the French horn, everything. I pushed him as much as I could and there were tense moments. He said I need to work on my bedside manner. I also remember him saying that sometimes a good argument was very necessary. I told him it was like arguing with my dad! He didn’t like that.

“Ultimately it was a wonderful experience. He is a ball of energy, he literally bounces around the studio. He is kind and thoughtful and caring. I went into that experience with a lot of respect for him and came out with even more.”

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RELEASE DATE
1971–
2020

Paul McCartney

TOP 40 SINGLES

A chronological pick of the Macca pops. BY MARK BEAUMONT

THE BEATLES WERE a finely balanced flavour – Paul's sweet tempered by John's sour, sprinkled with George's exotic spice. Solo, then, the saccharine could threaten to overpower Macca's music: *"Some people want to fill the world with silly love songs"*, McCartney defiantly sang in 1976, *"and what's wrong with that?"*

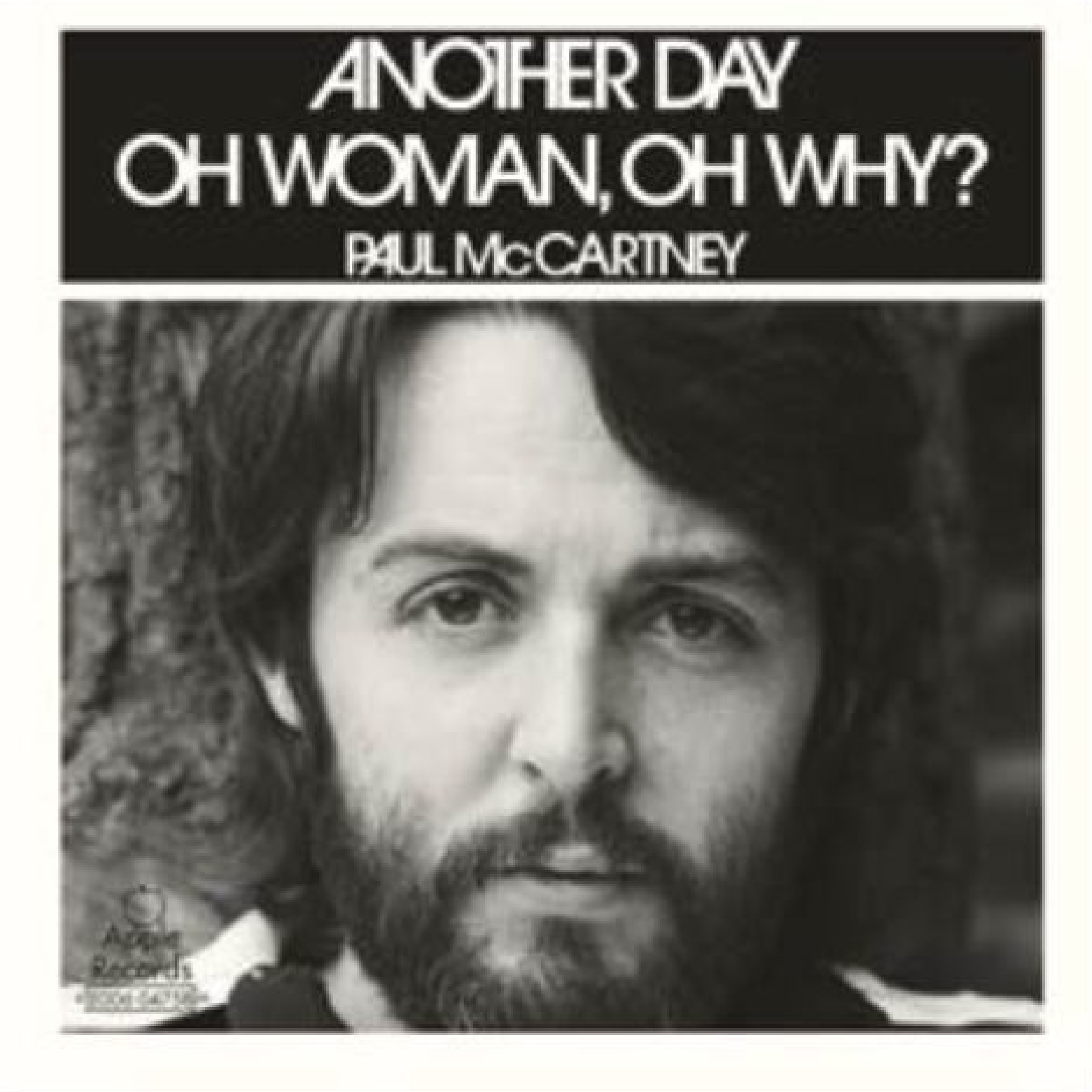
But McCartney's post-Beatles reputation as the purveyor of cheerful pop-rock belies what has become five decades of continued exploration and innovation. His earliest forays beyond the band, and outside George Martin's elegant production, inspired the very ethos of the lo-fi movement. Wings, though hardly the band The Beatles could have been, themselves displayed a breath-taking range throughout the '70s: Highlands anthems, mariachi party tunes, riotous glam, Bond bombast, disco for lovers, reggae entreaties for Irish reunification. They were a band capable of carrying McCartney's muse wherever it might direct them.

Then, having basically created the modern mainstream, it was only natural that McCartney would come to inhabit it, as he did for much of the '80s and '90s. But all the while there were hints of the cutting edge. Wings nodded to new wave with "Getting Closer"; "Temporary Secretary" helped embed electronica into the British pop mindset; later, *New* tracks saw Macca embrace distinctly modern textures. At the same time, there was a revisiting and refining of McCartney's core early styles and techniques that put some of his latter singles up there with his best work – the sublime fingerpicked folk of "Jenny Wren" or the sophisticated alt.pop of "Ever Present Past".

With later albums sporadic and hits collections either era-specific or broad and uncomprehensive, it takes a collection like McCartney's new singles boxset – a crate of 80 7-inch singles spanning his solo decades – to see such development in fast-forward, and also pick out the choice treats from a boundless buffet. Here then, presented chronologically, are our Top 40 Macca singles; evidence enough that McCartney's genius never really took a dip.

McCARTNEY PROD LTD
80
7"

Paul McCartney's The 7" Singles Box is out now via MPL/Capitol Records/ Universal Music Recordings.



ANOTHER DAY

APPLE, 1971

Where "Ob-La-Di…" met "Eleanor Rigby", McCartney's debut solo single (which first surfaced during *Let It Be* sessions) maintained the refined textures of late-era Beatles while hunting out a lo-fi sound of Paul and Linda's own, while also pointing towards Macca's post-Fabs leaning towards tropical reggae and samba. Now a solo benchmark.

UNCLE ALBERT/ ADMIRAL HALSEY

APPLE, 1971

A US-only release stitched together from unfinished fragments and tributing Paul's own uncle Albert Kendall and Fleet Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, this shifting, hallucinogenic daydream of old England and authoritarian America was both an apology and rebuke to older generations.

THE BACK SEAT OF MY CAR

APPLE, 1971

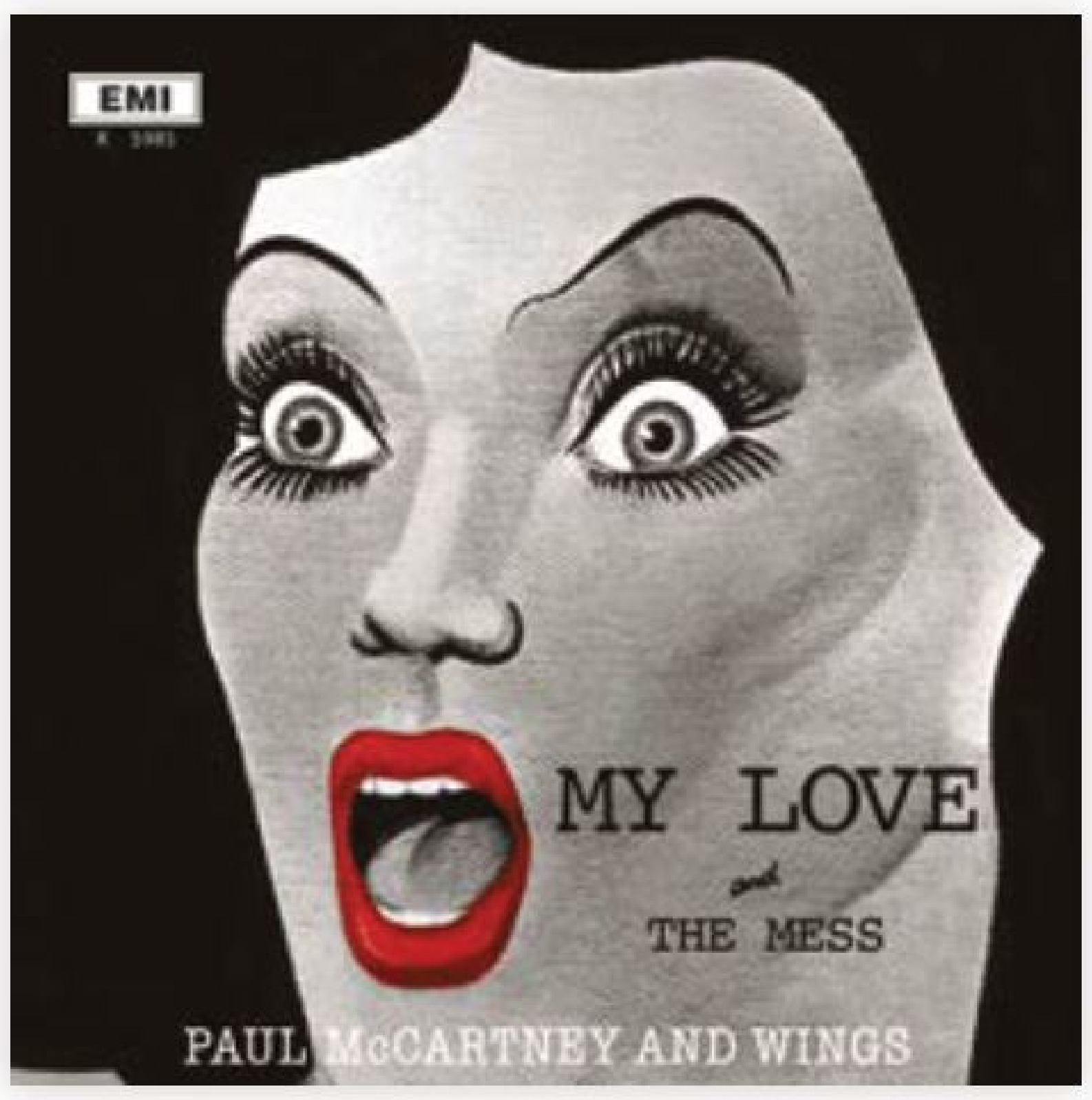
Further developing the multi-part formula that had evolved from "Good Vibrations" through "Happiness Is A Warm Gun" to *Abbey Road*'s side two and "Uncle Albert…", Macca's most swerving road song variously stopped off at *Pet Sounds*, Bacharach, *Sgt Pepper* and "Get Back" en route to fan favouritism.

wings
HI HI HI
C MOON
Apple

HI HI HI

APPLE, 1972

Early Wings found their root and foundation in this pleasing and impassioned glam boogie, banned by the BBC for its sexually suggestive lyric and supposed titular drug reference. Instead, reggae flip "C Moon" got the lion's share of airplay, and both sides would become Wings live mainstays.


EMI
MY LOVE
and
THE MESS
PAUL McCARTNEY AND WINGS

MY LOVE

APPLE, 1973

Among McCartney's finest love songs to the lovely Linda, the lead track from *Red Rose Speedway* came drenched in grandiose Richard Hewson strings and caressed by Henry McCulloch's sublime guitar solo. Sentimental and simplistic, yes, but such traits would become occasional solo Macca trademarks and rarely came as enveloping as this.

Wings
LEDMOTIVET UR NYA JAMES-BOND-FILMEN (MED ROGER MOORE) "LEVA OCH LÅTA DÖ"
"LIVE AND LET DIE"

LIVE AND LET DIE

APPLE, 1973

Few Bond themes managed to capture both the classic allure and pulse-pumping drama of the franchise, making Macca's symphonic rock contribution to Roger Moore's voodoo exploits the most successful 007 theme on release and arguably the best of the entire bunch. Live, the majority of the pyro budget goes on this song.

ELECTROLA
Apple
Jet
PAUL McCARTNEY & WINGS

JET

APPLE, 1974

Wings' reggae-speckled classic of supersonic glam – named after one of the McCartney's dogs – has been long tarred with the infamy of being Alan Partridge's favourite song by "the band The Beatles could have been", but it still boasts a solid Mach 7 coasting velocity and a roar of a B-side in "Let Me Roll It".

ELECTROLA
Apple
Paul McCartney &Wings
Band On The Run
Nineteen Hundred And Eighty Five

BAND ON THE RUN

APPLE, 1974

The culmination of Macca's multi-segment song work, Wings' signature tune was inspired by rock'n'roll drug busts, the desperado image of the Eagles and Bob Dylan and Paul's desire to escape Apple's financial mess. As it played out over three acts – tropical ballad, funk rock and a break for the country rock border – even Lennon approved.

PAUL McCARTNEY & WINGS
Mrs. Vandebilt
Bluebird
Apple

MRS VANDERBILT

APPLE, 1974

Seemingly dipping into a Tijuana cantina for vibes (although the song was actually recorded during a power outage in Lagos), Wings proved their adaptable chops on this tribute to music hall performer Charlie Chester, catchphrase "Down in the jungle living in a tent, better than a bungalow, no rent".

JUNIOR'S FARM
paul mccartney & wings
SALLY G.
APPLE

JUNIOR'S FARM

APPLE, 1974

A nonsense-lyric answer to Dylan's "Maggie's Farm", this compulsive non-album single extolling the pleasures of country life exemplified Wings' innate ability to refresh and rejuvenate blues and country rock. Alongside subsequent single "Walking In The Park With Eloise", it also represents the entirety of McCartney's 1970s Nashville period.

LISTEN TO WHAT THE MAN SAID
wings

LISTEN TO WHAT THE MAN SAID

CAPITOL, 1975

Galloping along on a saxophone solo that visiting Blues Brother Tony Scott put down within half an hour after being asked to join Wings' 1975 New Orleans sessions, "Listen…" predicted the glossy jazz pop which the likes of Christopher Cross would make regular chart fodder in the 1980s.

WINGS
SILLY LOVE SONGS
COOK OF THE HOUSE

SILLY LOVE SONGS

CAPITOL, 1976

Concocting a disco song for the doe-eyed lovers in the corner, Wings' soppiest song was intended as a bite-back at critics attacking McCartney's tendency towards sentimental pop slush. And listening to it with uncynical modern ears, we'd like to know: what's wrong with that?

ELECTROLA
WINGS
LET 'EM IN
BEWARE MY LOVE

LET 'EM IN

CAPITOL, 1976

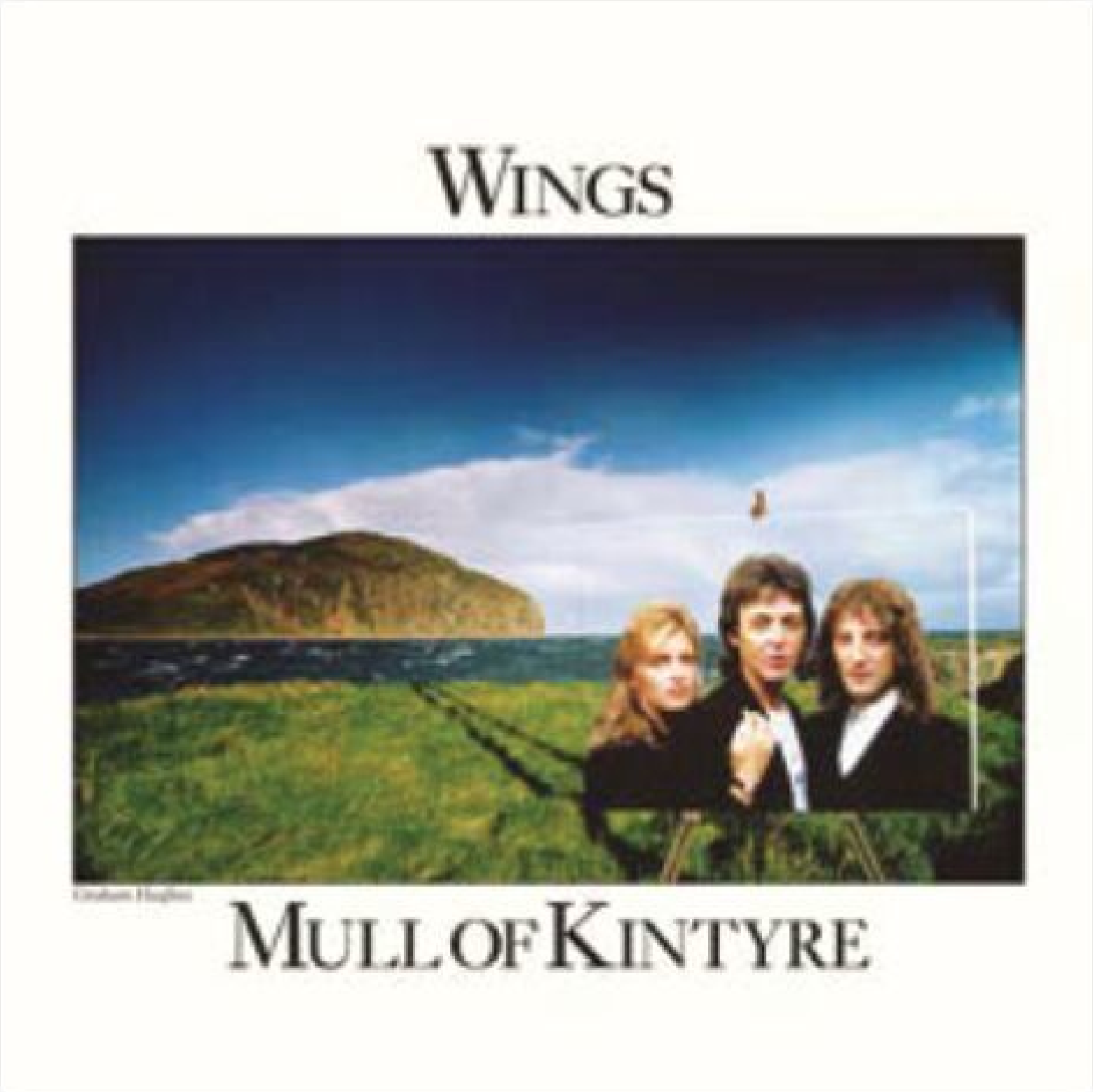
That the second single from *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* reached No 1 on the US easy-listening chart speaks volumes as to McCartney's mid-'70s vibe. Yet "Let 'Em In" was quite a formal affair; a military tattoo in honour of his endless hospitality, the lyric might have been all drop-in-for-a-natter but the music suggested luncheon strictly by appointment.

ハートのささやき
ウイングス
ポール・マッカートニー

MAYBE I'M AMAZED (LIVE)

CAPITOL, 1977

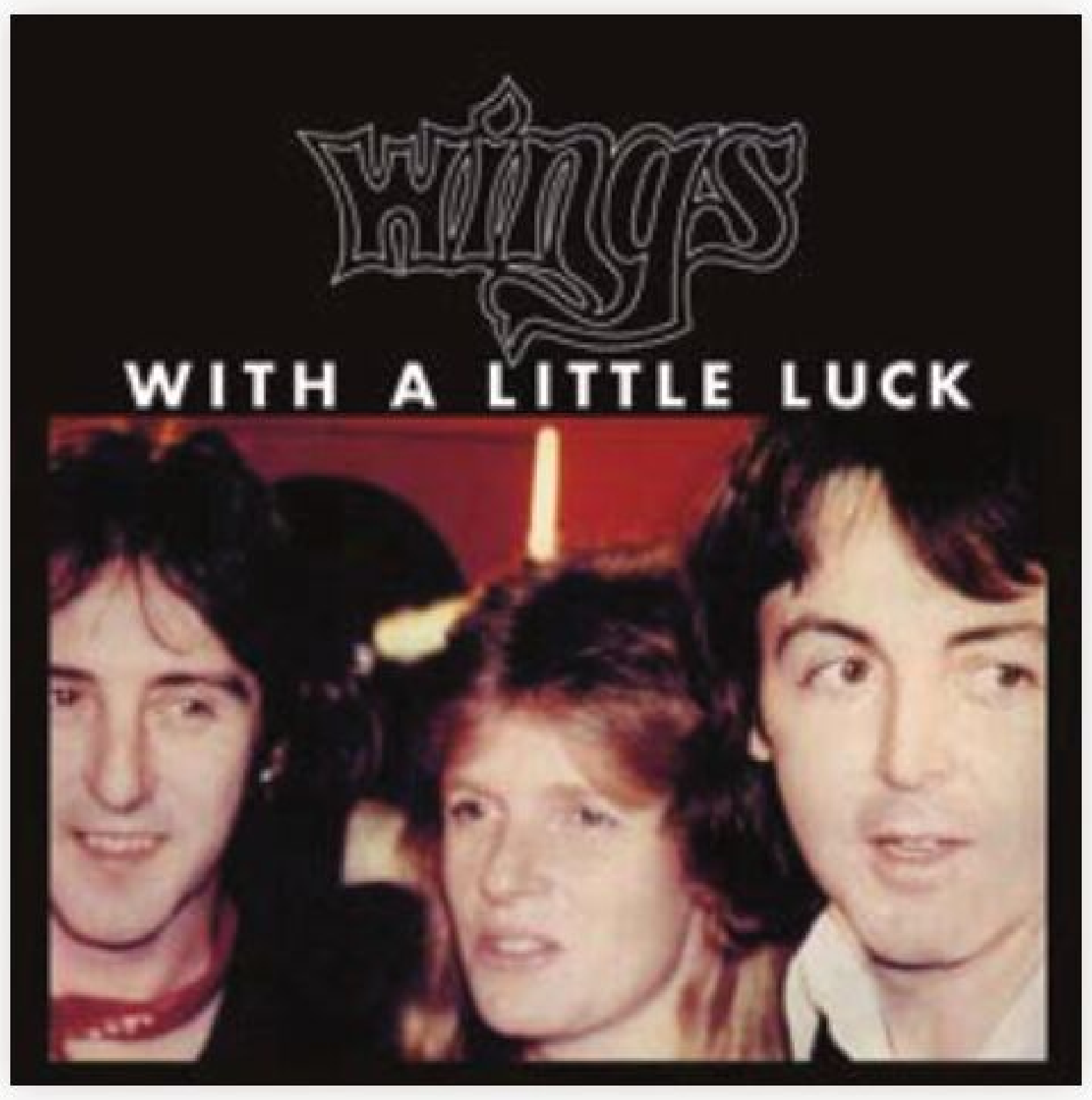
Culled from *Wings Over America*, the live take of "Maybe I'm Amazed" made good on the bombastic pop promise of the *McCartney* version. Paul unleashes his "Lady Madonna" yowl over angelic backing vocals and ponderous band crescendos and Denny Laine makes the utmost of the battle hymn-worthy guitar solo.


WINGS
MULL OF KINTYRE

MULL OF KINTYRE

CAPITOL, 1977

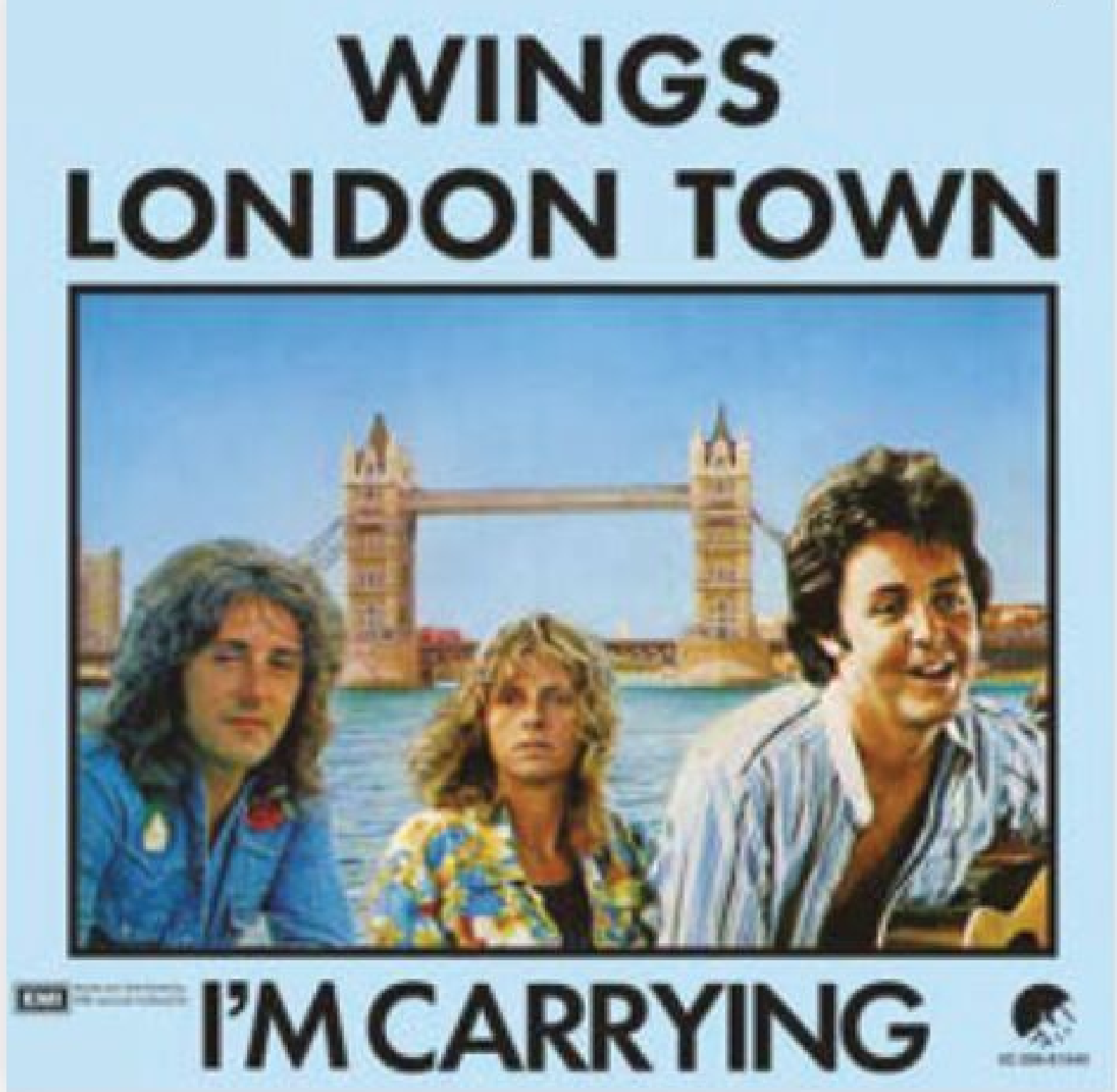
Now hear us out. Bagpipes, yes, big ones, but returning to Macca's gargantuan but much mocked 1970s folk smash – Wings' biggest hit and one of the best-selling singles of all time – reveals a tender, faithful and creative approach to the Scottish traditional ballad. And you can't argue with goosebumps.


wings
WITH A LITTLE LUCK

WITH A LITTLE LUCK

PARLOPHONE, 1978

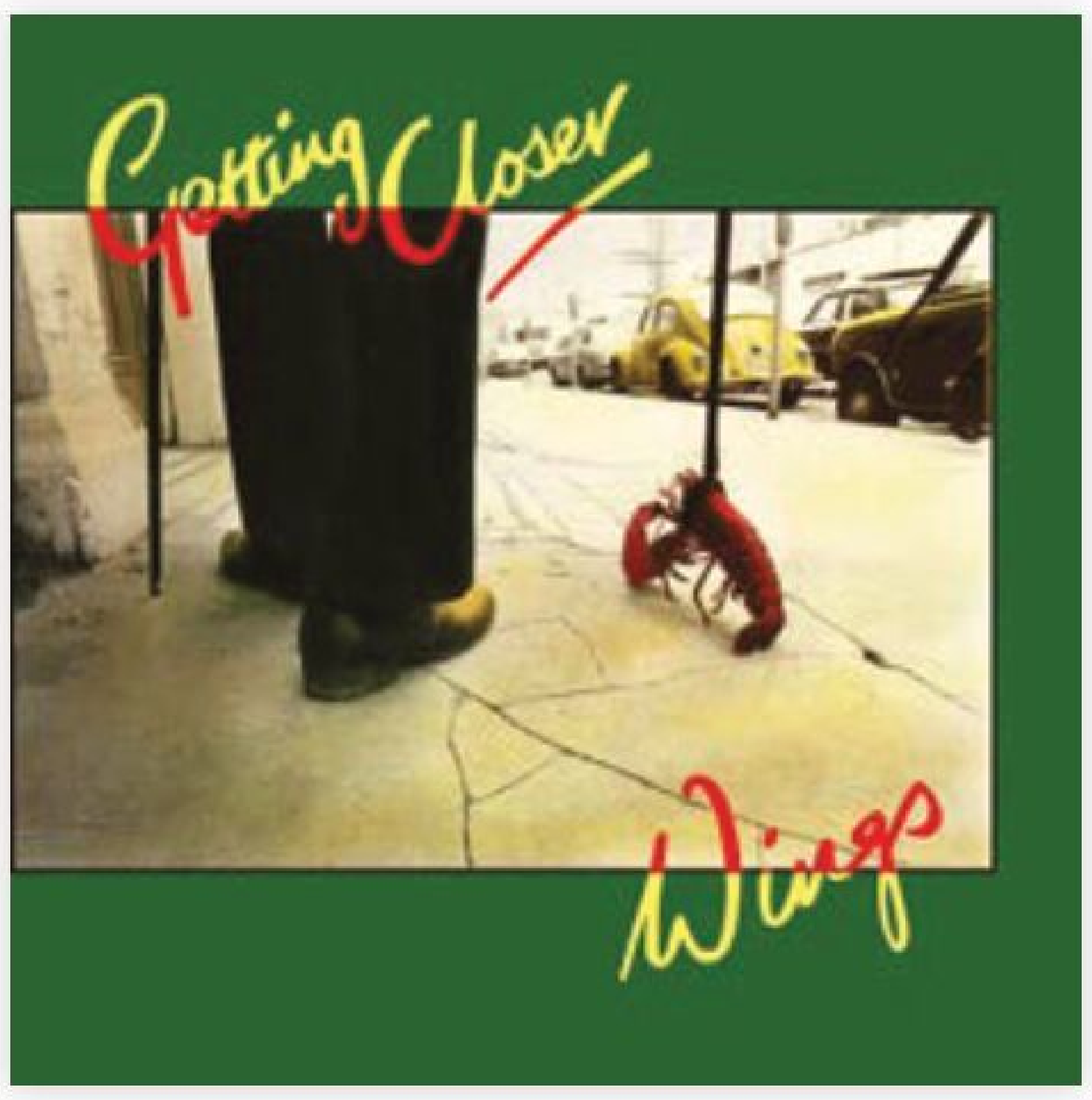
Previewing the gentle synthpop that would eventually dominate *Pipes Of Peace*, the lead track from *London Town* graced Wings' sense of wholesome optimism with a chorus harking back to the minor chord sophistication of Macca's mid-'60s ballads. No comets exploded but many hearts were warmed.



LONDON TOWN

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1978

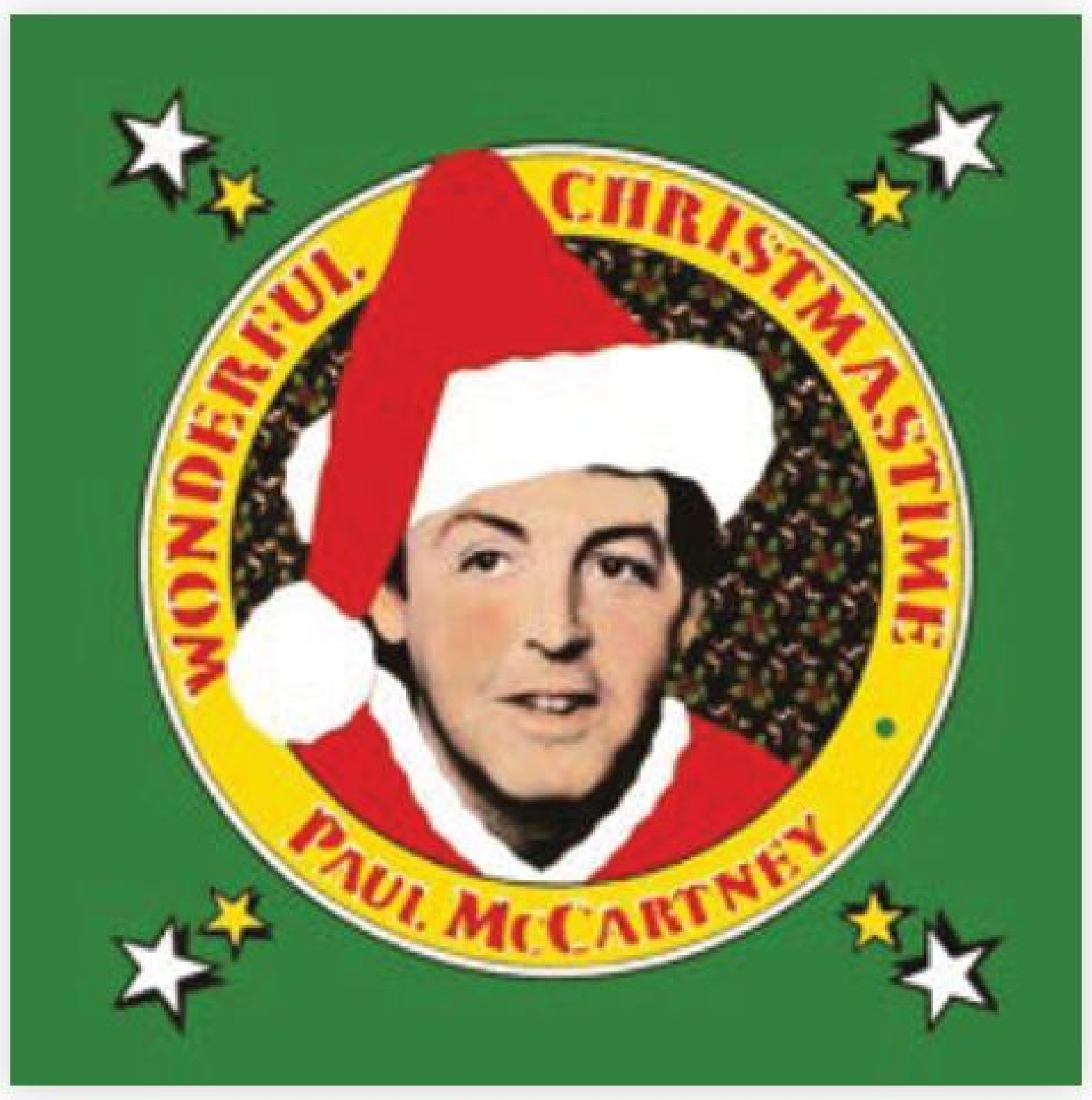
"Waterloo Sunset" met "Penny Lane" on *London Town*'s dream-like fantasia of clownish policemen and flute-tooting barkers, all shrouded in a rich orchestral pea-souper. A fantastical evocation of London street life, the critics raved. Bolstered by one of McCartney's most moving and involving B-side ballads in "I'm Carrying", too.



GETTING CLOSER

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1979

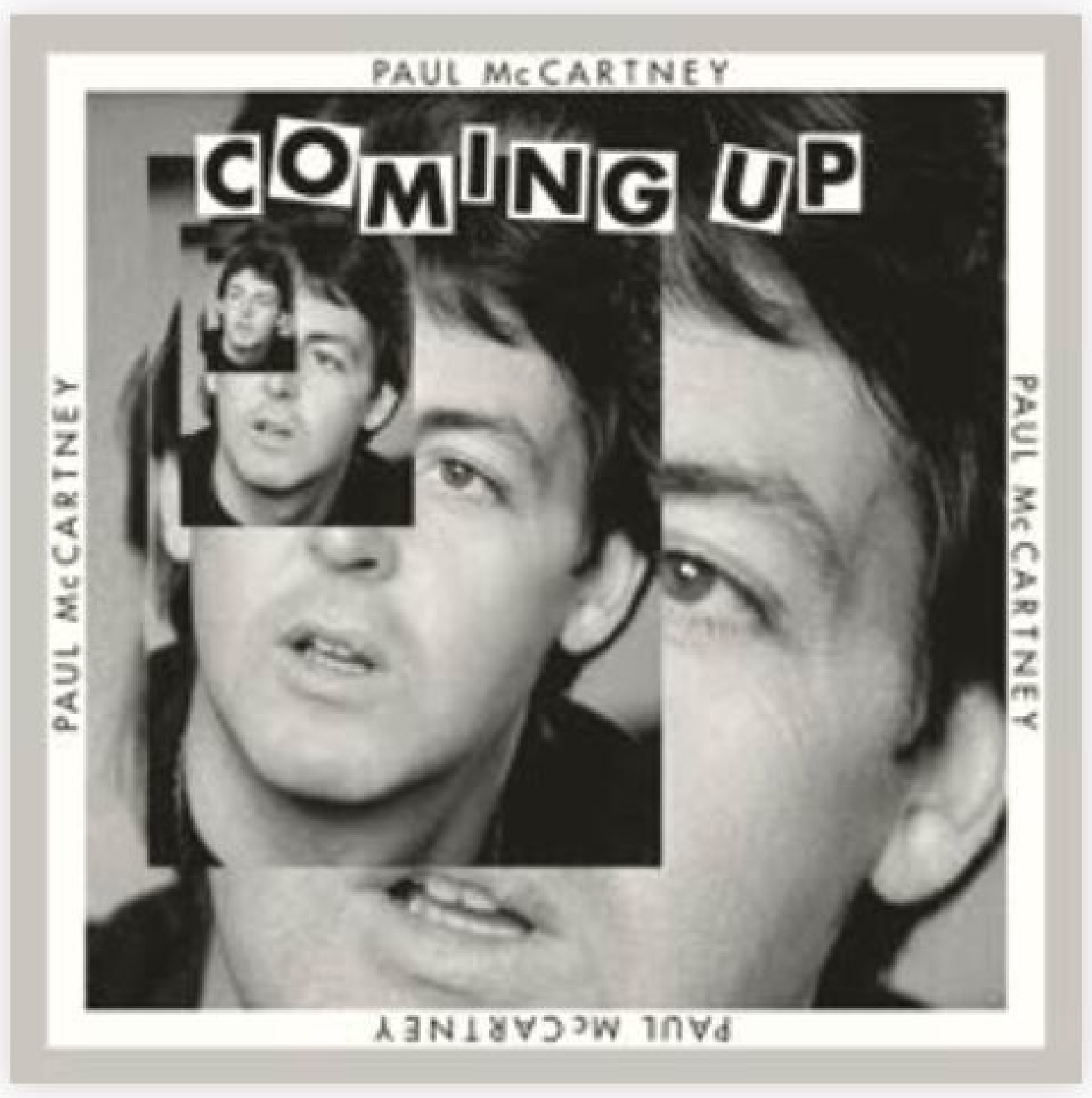
Ear glued to the ground, Macca emulated the burgeoning new wave and ska movements on this inspired *Back To The Egg* cut that sounds like it could easily have fallen off Costello's *My Aim Is True* or Squeeze's *Cool For Cats*, but for its expensive quasi-gothic climax.



WONDERFUL CHRISTMASTIME

PARLOPHONE, 1979

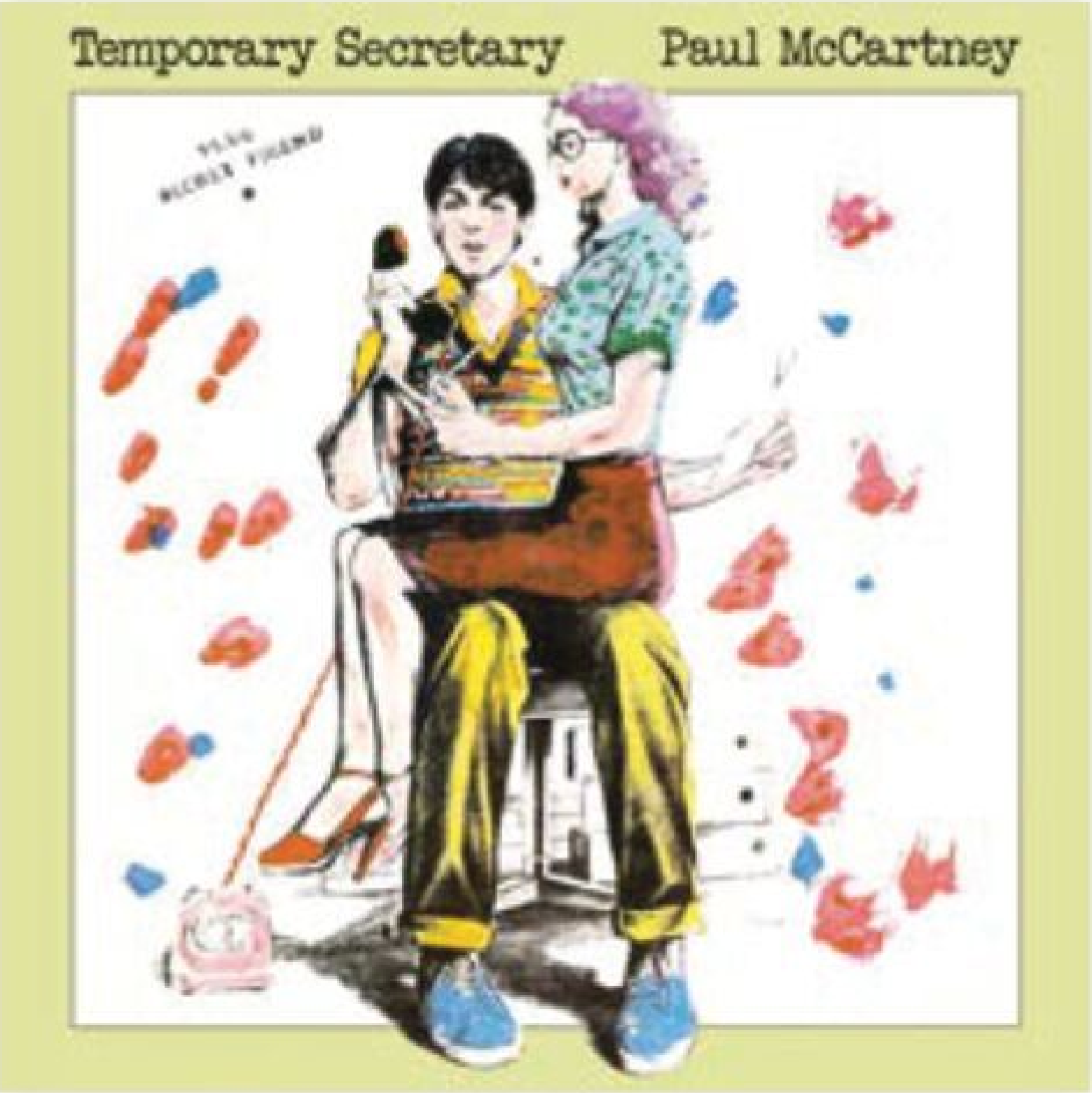
Having been awoken, perhaps, to the financial merriments of the festive hit by 1977's Xmas No 1 "Mull Of Kintyre", Paul went full Santa with a snowy-synthed and shamelessly sleighbelled classic of the form. Its intro alone, 40-plus years on, now naturally prompts the olfactory hallucination of turkey and sprouts.



COMING UP

PARLOPHONE, 1980

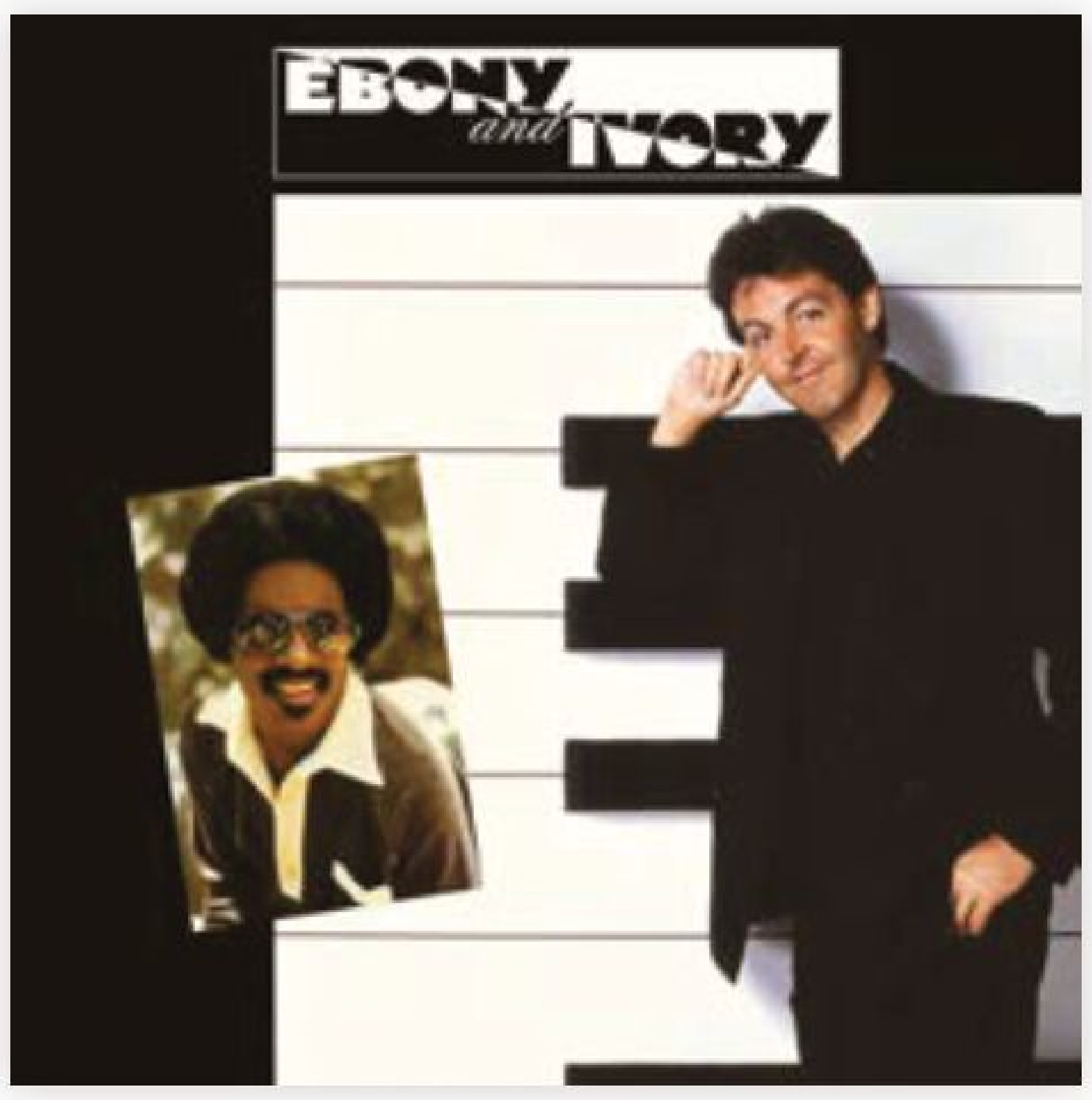
"Fuck a pig, it's Paul!" John Lennon is said to have exclaimed upon hearing *McCartney II*'s startling lead single, with its lo-fi new wave groove and vari-speed vocals, and vowed to return to the studio himself. It might be somewhat throwaway melody-wise, then, but it gave us "Watching The Wheels".



TEMPORARY SECRETARY

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1980

Now a landmark in formative electronica, helping to popularise a style then favoured by bands in Sheffield, this was a fiction based on Paul's own search for zero-hours office help after Apple. Although there was a real Alfred Marks Bureau providing temps to the *Carry On* '70s businessmen Macca portrays here.



EBONY AND IVORY

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1982

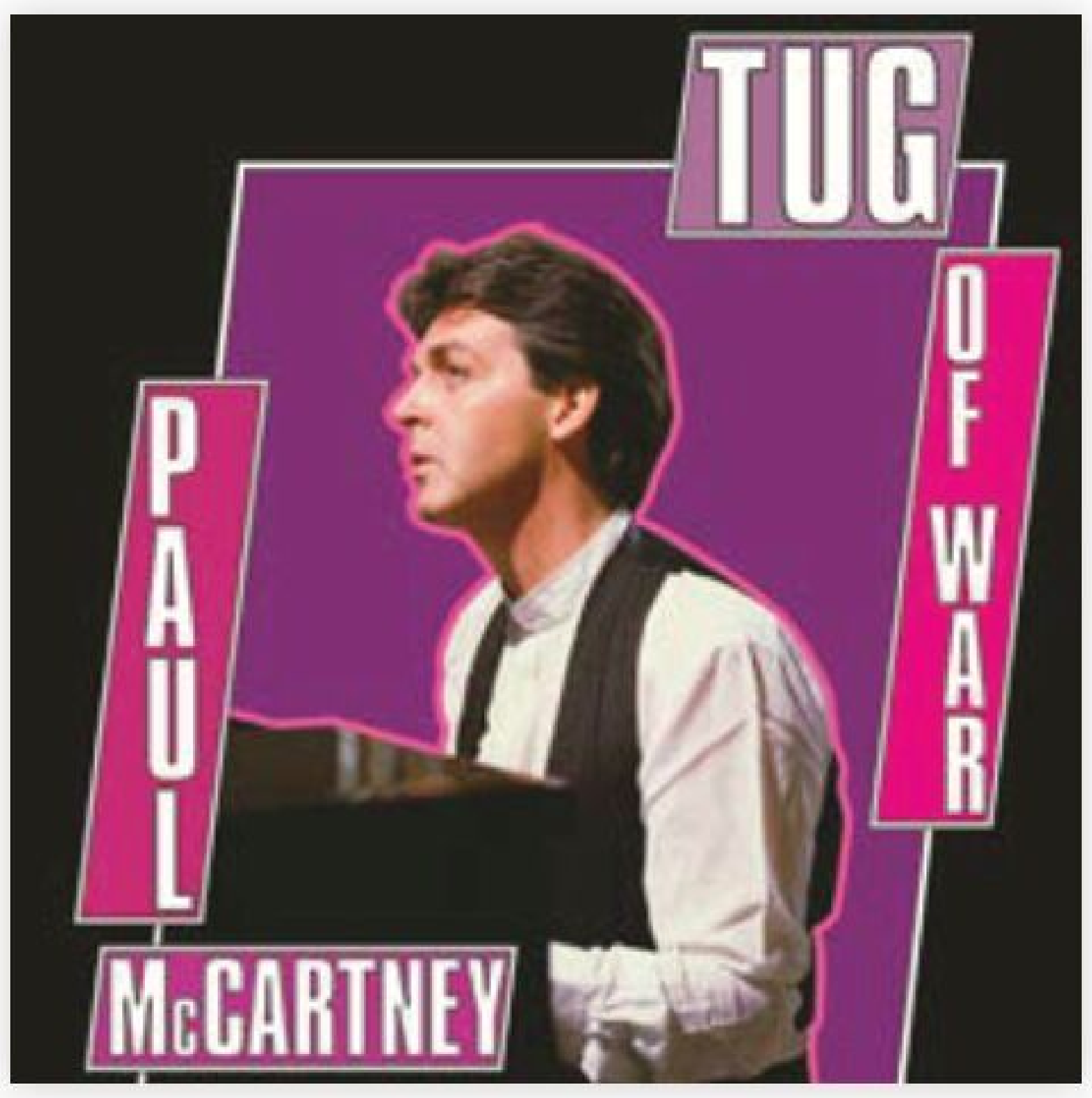
The two years between "Temporary Secretary" and this classic piece of piano-as-anti-racist-statement schmaltz sounds like a full career chasm. But Paul's back-slappy duet with Stevie Wonder oozes a certain starry charm and its message of racial unity proved crude but effective: the song was banned in apartheid South Africa.

TAKE IT AWAY
Paul McCartney

TAKE IT AWAY

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1982

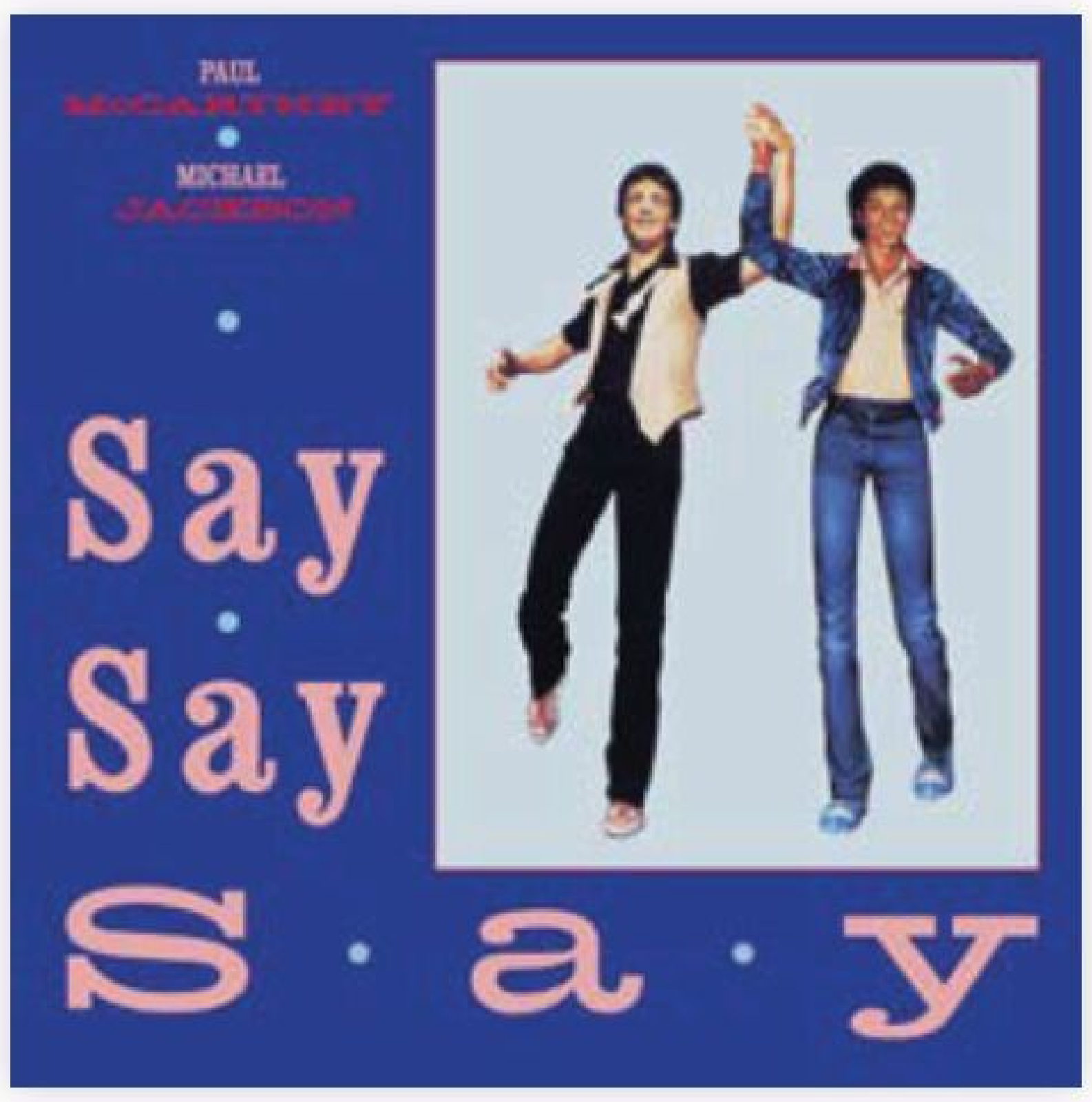
Evolving the multi-part-song philosophy to encompass one song played in numerous styles, "Take It Away" was a subtly inspired pop moment that pointed the way to *Graceland* with its Afrobeat intro rhythm, took a diversion into drivetime lounge pop with 10cc in the back seat and ended up at a horn-driven mariachi party.



TUG OF WAR

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1982

A symphonic "Fernando", *Tug Of War*'s title track was amongst the plushest Macca tunes since "The Long And Winding Road". Much speculation has ensued that the song is a comment on McCartney's relationship with Lennon and, two years after John's death, it certainly carried that sort of weight.



SAY SAY SAY

PARLOPHONE, 1983

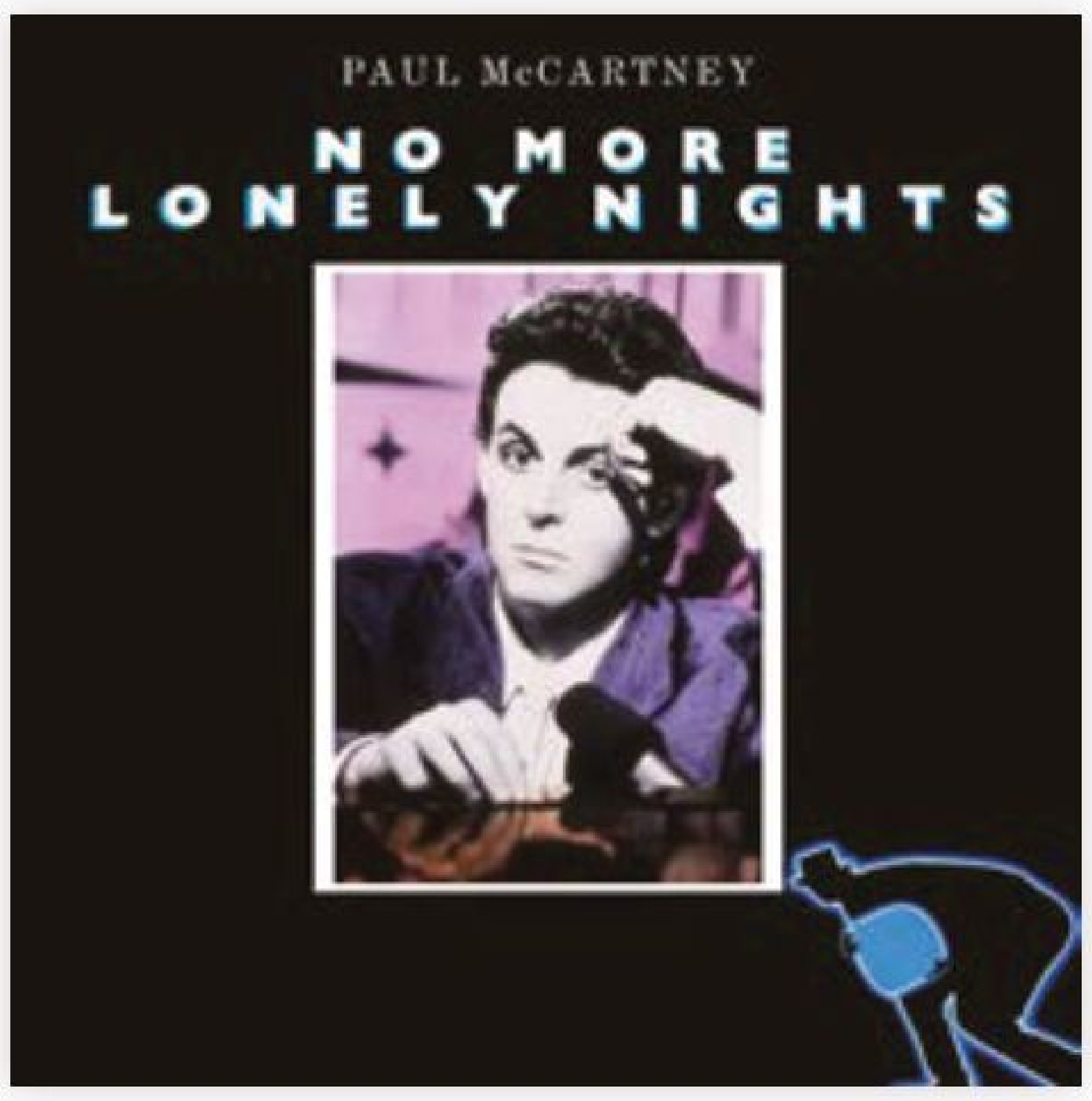
Sister-piece to "The Girl Is Mine" from Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album, the jumpier "Say Say Say" emerged as the lead track for *Pipes Of Peace*. The sessions, legendarily, where were McCartney introduced Jackson to the idea of owning song publishing to make "big money". Behold: within a few years Jackson owned many of Macca's own songs.

PIPES OF PEACE
PAUL McCARTNEY
PAUL McCARTNEY
PIPES OF PEACE

PIPES OF PEACE

PARLOPHONE, 1983

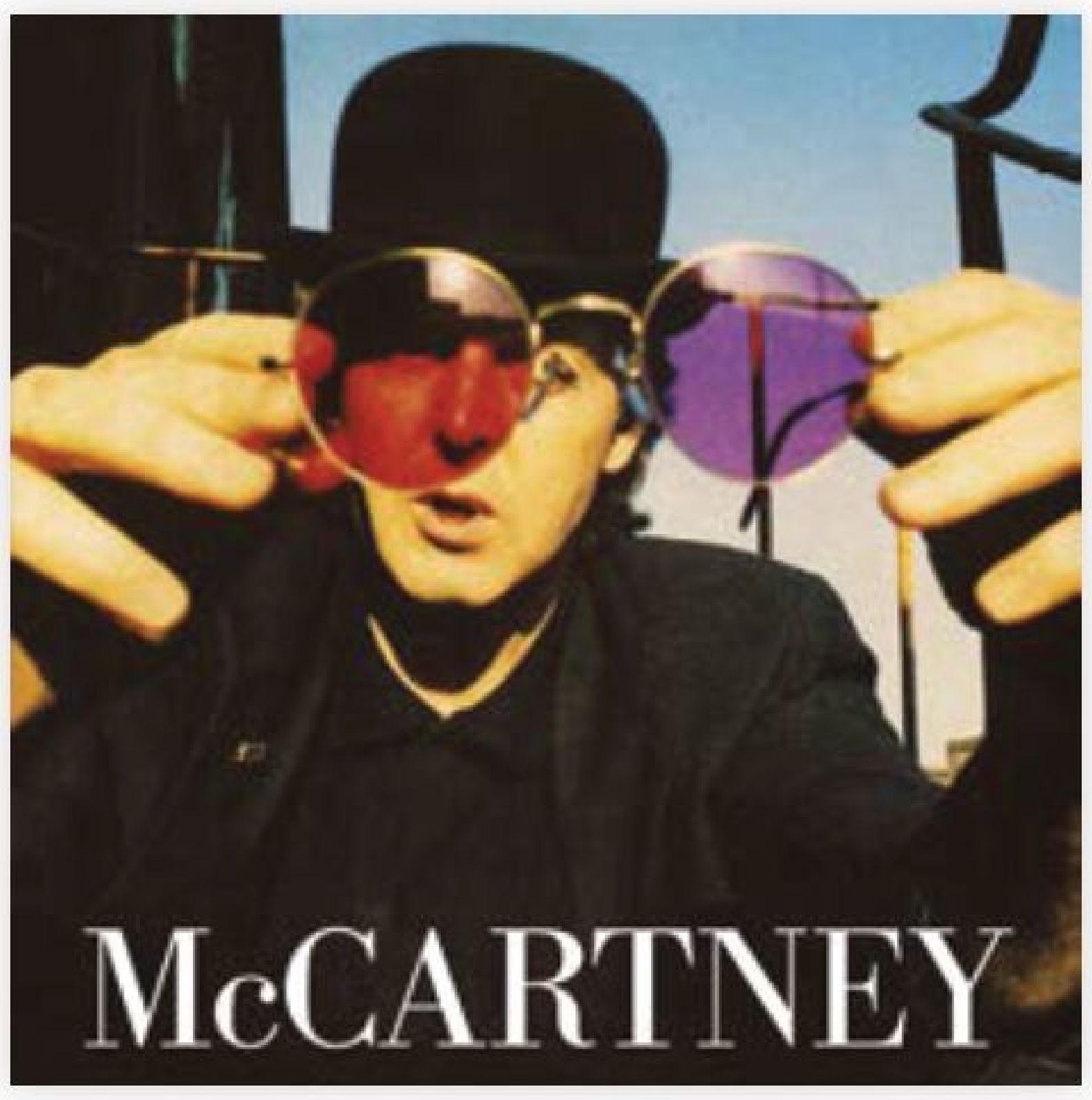
A stirring anti-war jig with an aboriginal bent and sights set on the Christmas market – the video even hammered the point home by depicting the 1914 World War I football match between British and German trenches – "Pipes Of Peace" came to define McCartney's ultra-slick early-'80s period.



NO MORE LONELY NIGHTS

PARLOPHONE, 1984

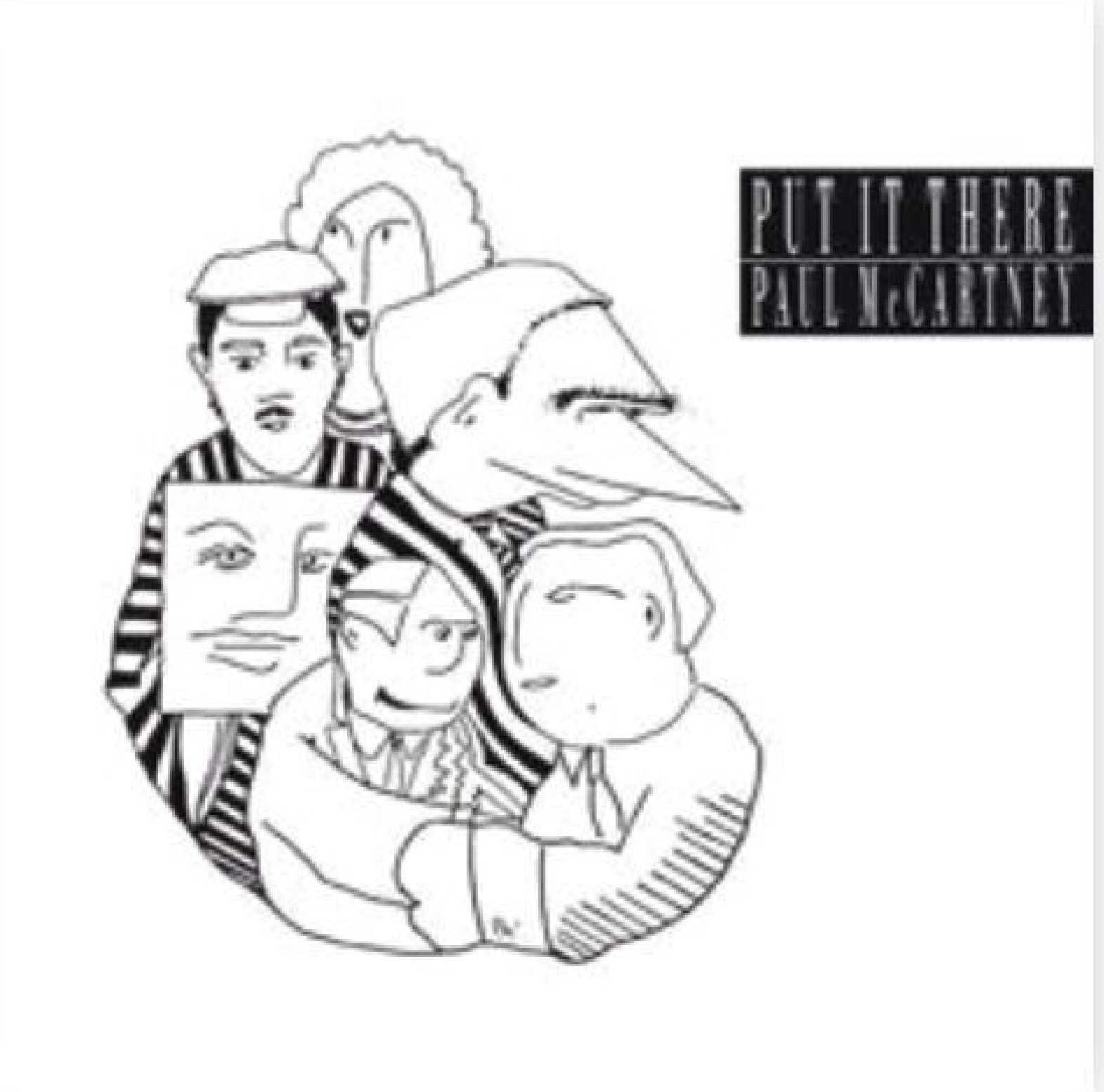
The movie – *Give My Regards To Broad Street* – was a bit of a dud, but its soundtrack was a belter, combining prime Beatles ballads with this cinematic power ballad featuring a guitar solo from David Gilmour. Its production dates it firmly to the *Moonlighting* era, but the melody endures.



MY BRAVE FACE

PARLOPHONE, 1989

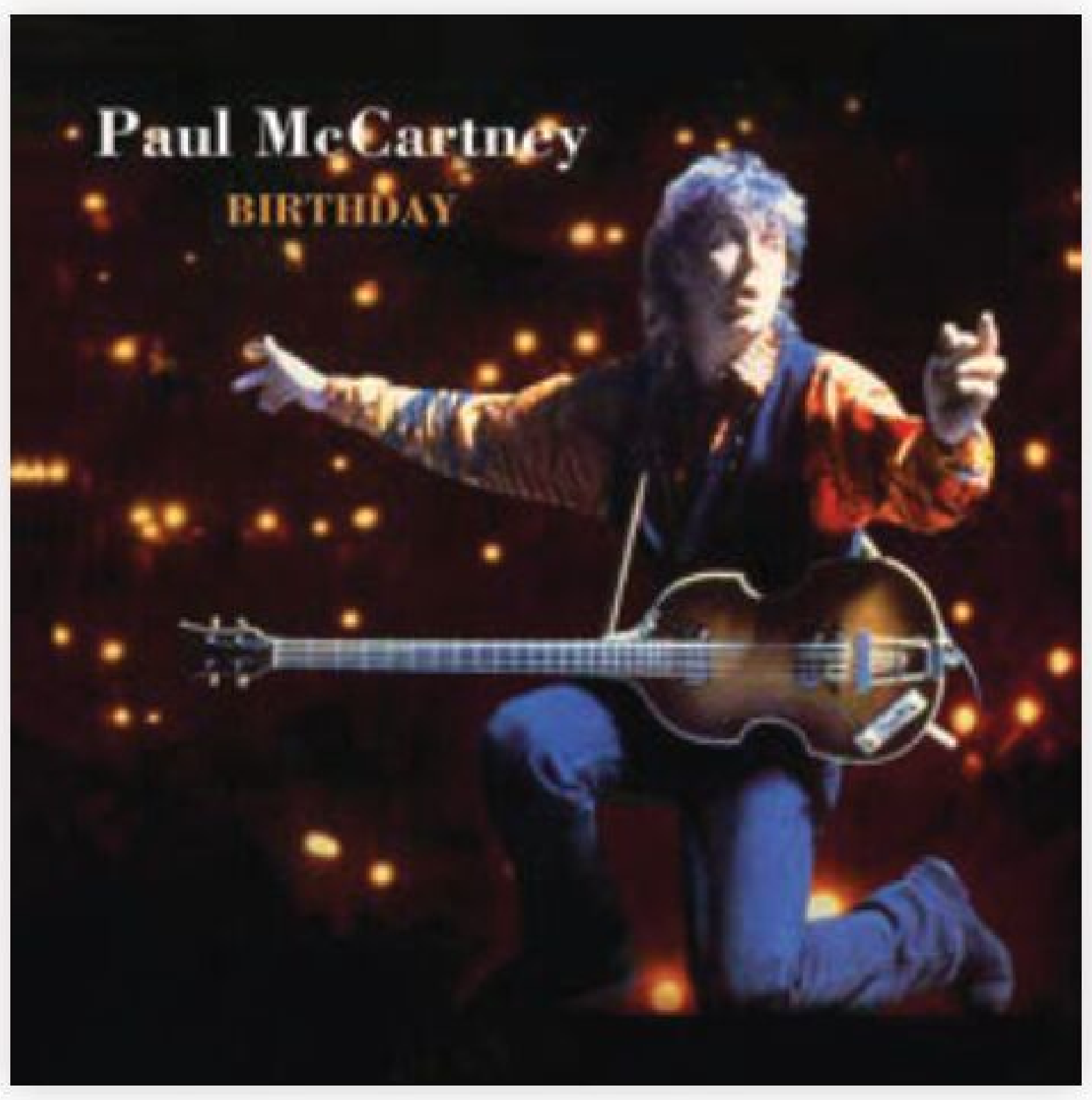
Press To Play was a step too far into '80s synthpop mundanity, but McCartney redeemed his '80s with *Flowers In The Dirt* and this wonderfully breezy pop chug emerging from a fruitful collaboration with Elvis Costello, who clearly understood the brisk and direct appeal of Macca's early Beatles songwriting.


PUT IT THERE
PAUL McCARTNEY

PUT IT THERE

PARLOPHONE, 1990

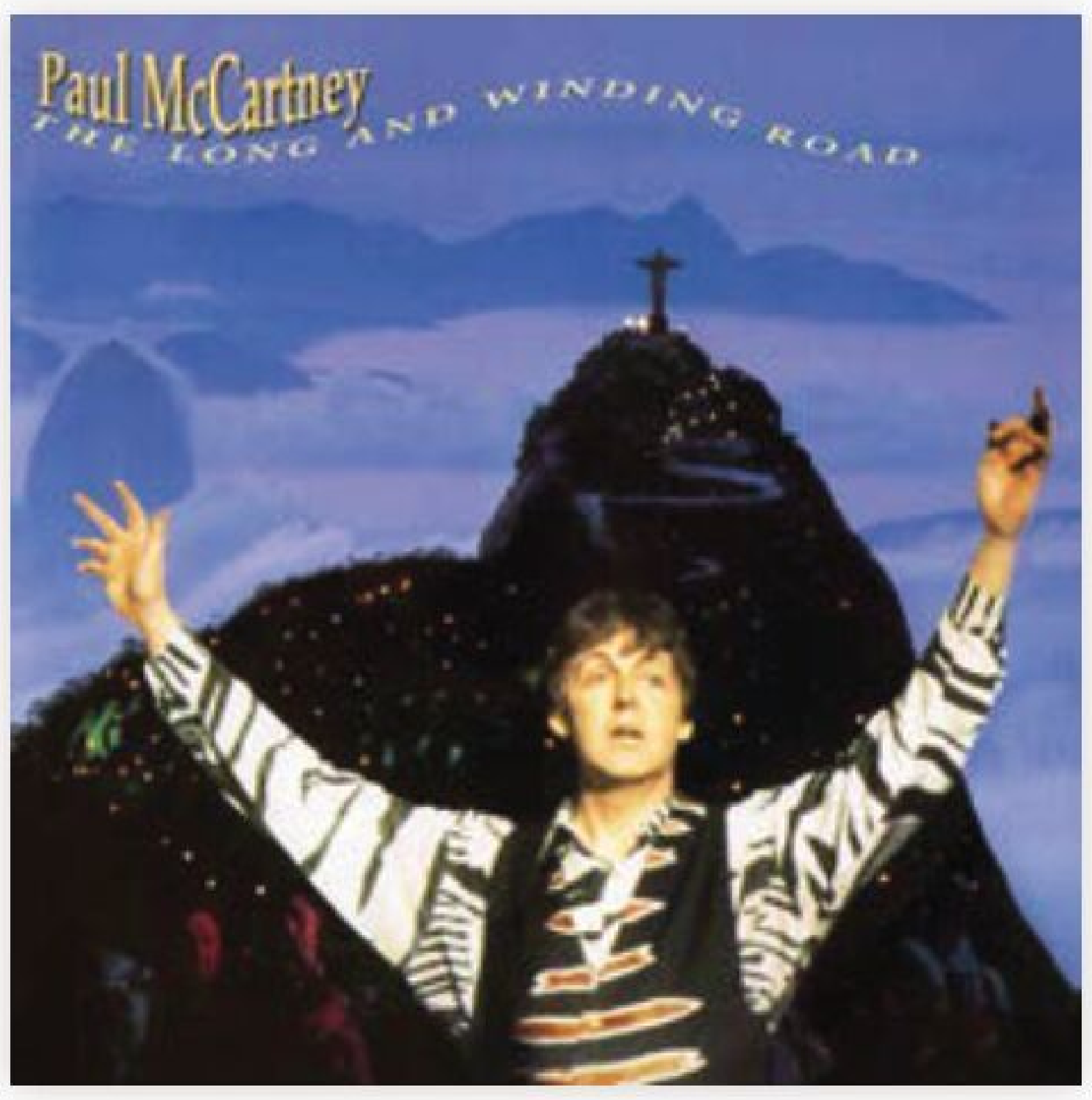
The ghost of "Blackbird" arose at various points in Macca's latter career, and "Put It There" was one such night flight. A sweet folk ditty from *Flowers In The Dirt*, it only became a single because Paul saw the girls at his concert at the Paris Omnisports in October 1989 grabbing their partners to dance to it.


Paul McCartney
BIRTHDAY

BIRTHDAY (LIVE)

PARLOPHONE, 1990

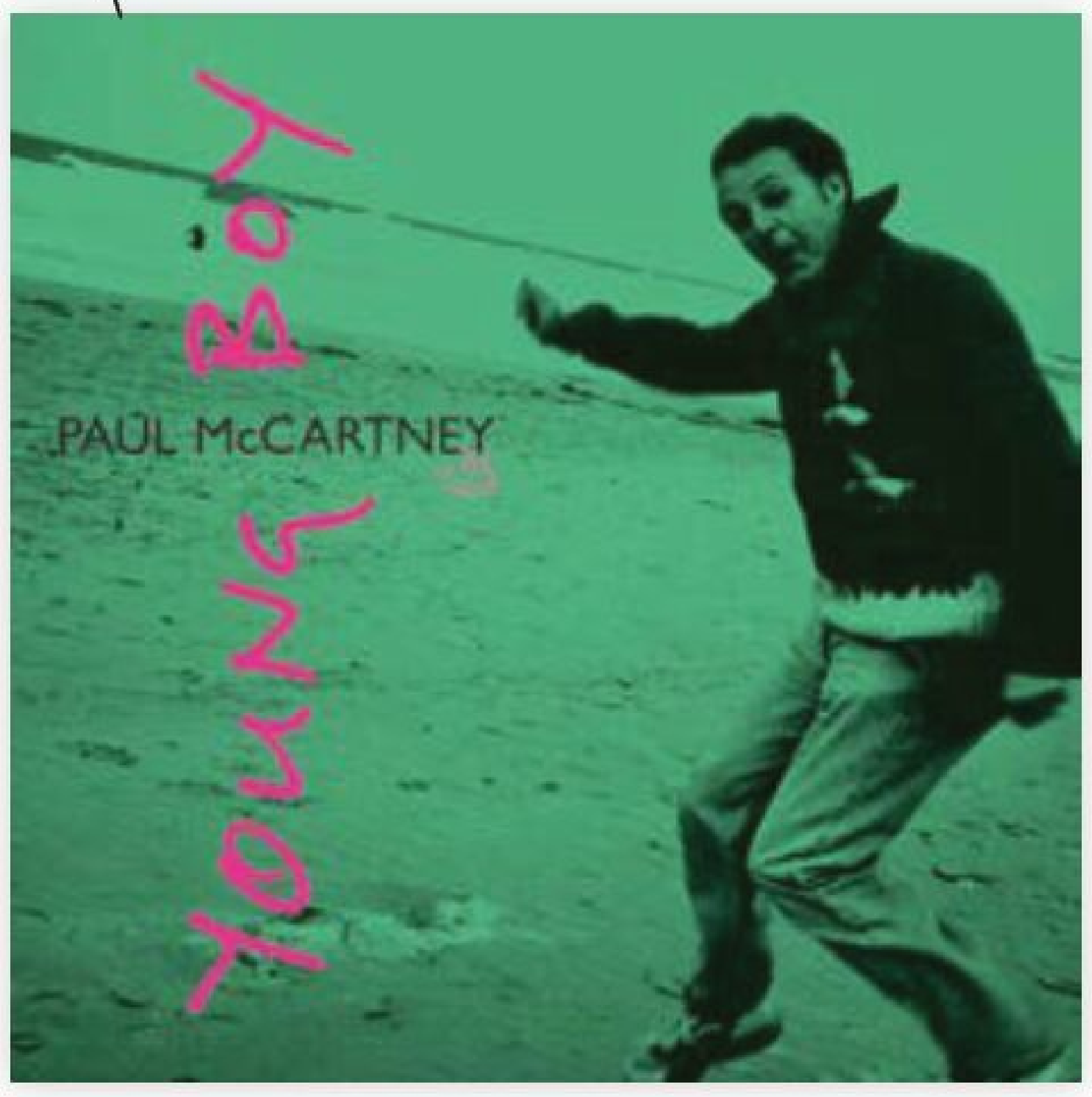
Blasting out of *Tripping The Live Fantastic*, which documented McCartney's 1989-90 world tour, "Birthday" had lost none of its celebratory blues vigour in 22 years, still feeling like trying to blow out a cake covered in rockets. The 12-inch came with a B-side Beatles mash-up entitled "P.S. Love Me Do".


Paul McCartney
THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD (LIVE)

PARLOPHONE, 1990

Paul had already retrodden "The Long And Winding Road" with Wings live in 1975 and on *Give My Regards To Broad Street*, but this cut from *Tripping The Live Fantastic* was his first stage attempt to recreate the full Spector orchestrations. Worked a treat.


YOUNG BOY
PAUL McCARTNEY

YOUNG BOY

PARLOPHONE, 1997

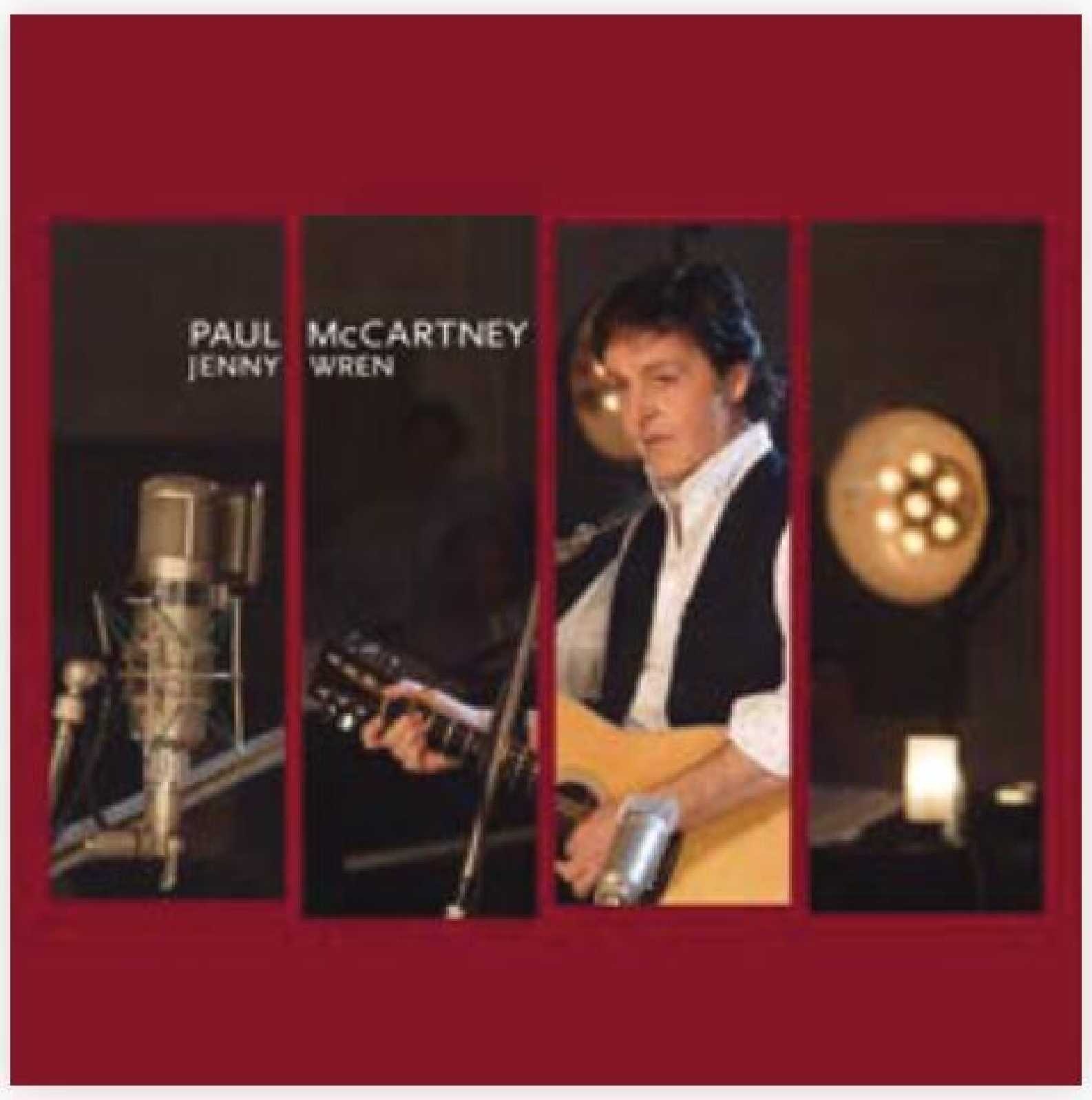
Jeff Lynne didn't produce this particular *Flaming Pie* track, but following his work on the '95 Beatles reunion material his fingerprints were all over its adorable Beatledelic jangle. Among the B-sides was "Oobu Joobu", a 20-minute collage of home demos, interviews and unreleased songs from McCartney's radio programme of the same name.

BEAUTIFUL NIGHT
PAUL McCARTNEY

BEAUTIFUL NIGHT

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1997

Featuring *Sgt Pepper* brass, "Let It Be" piano, a sly "Lucy In The Sky…" D-minor, an unexpected rock-out and some Liverpudlian babble at the end, "Beautiful Night" (originally recorded back in 1986) was one of solo Paul's most flagrant reference to the Beatles years, yet marked one of the most refreshing moments on *Flaming Pie*.


PAUL McCARTNEY
JENNY WREN

JENNY WREN

PARLOPHONE, 2005

With McCartney fingerpicking in the style of "Blackbird" and "Mother Nature's Son", the second single from *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard* – named after a character from Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* – advanced on Macca's immortal pastoral work by including a duduk solo. Arguably his greatest 21st-century track.

ever present past

EVER PRESENT PAST

MPL/HEAR MUSIC, 2007

Finding a meatier, modern sound for *Memory Almost Full*, McCartney penned one of his sprightliest melodies in decades for its second single. The video, featuring Paul meeting his own doppelganger, has been interpreted as a togue-in-cheek reference to the Paul Is Dead myth.

THE FIREMAN
SING THE CHANGES / NOTHING TOO MUCH JUST OUT OF SIGHT

SING THE CHANGES

ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2008

Recorded for the third album by The Fireman, "Sing The Changes" suggests that performing with U2 at Live 8 in 2005 might have turned Macca's head. Canyon rock in the Bono/Springsteen vein, the song emerged from an improvised approach to the record, with McCartney writing both melody and lyrics on the spot.

PAUL McCARTNEY
MY VALENTINE / GET YOURSELF ANOTHER FOOL

MY VALENTINE

HEAR MUSIC, 2012

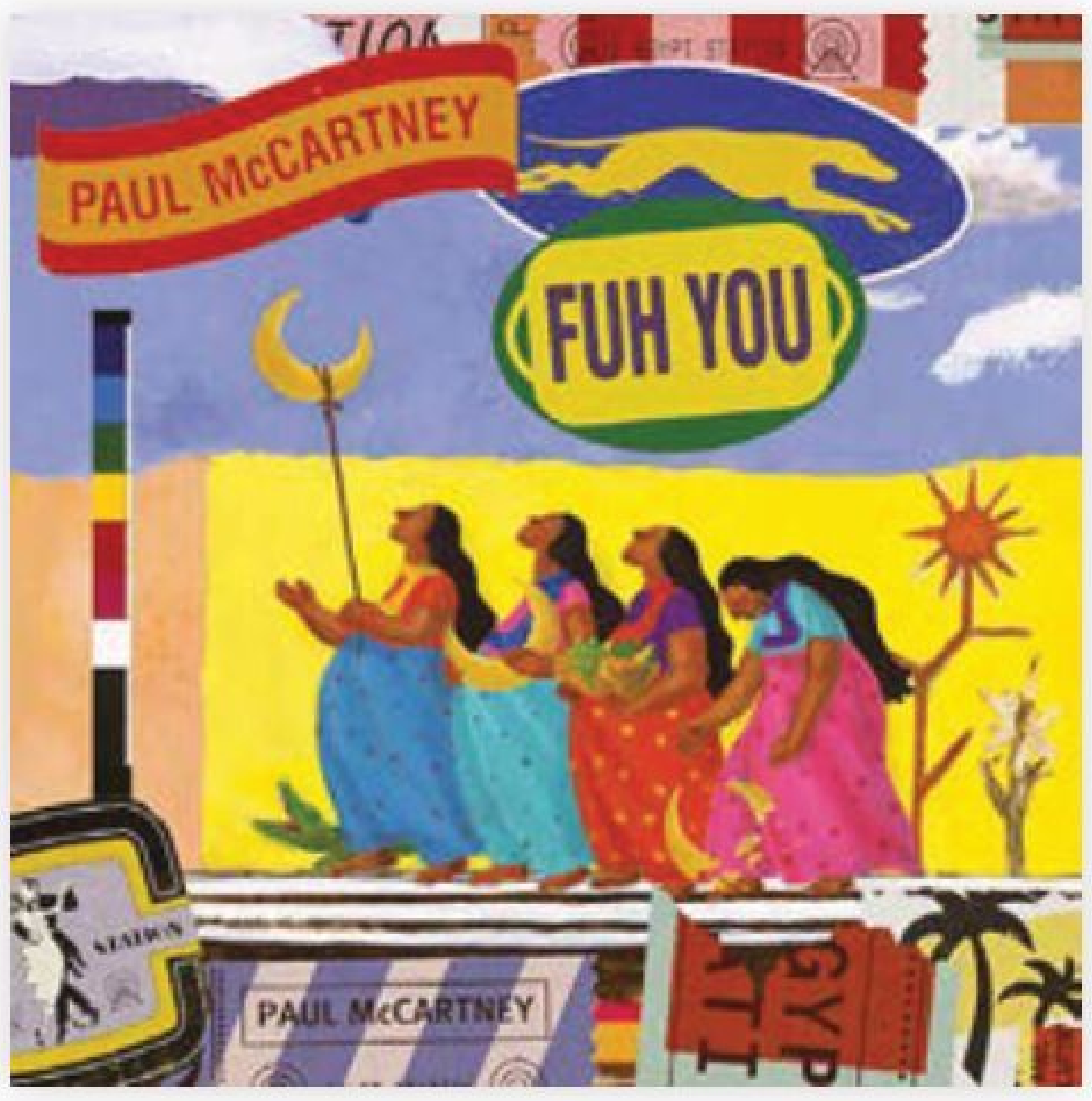
The smoky "My Valentine" was one of two McCartney compositions on 2012's jazzy primarily-covers album *Kisses On The Bottom*, and probably the best of the bunch at capturing the sumptuous jazz club vibe of the record. Caused a stir at Glastonbury 2022, when McCartney played it beneath a large image of Johnny Depp.

PAUL McCARTNEY
QUEENIE EYE / SAVE US

QUEENIE EYE

UNIVERSAL, 2013

Produced by Paul Epworth as part of *New*'s embrace of contemporary alternative sounds, "Queenie Eye" graced a classic Macca glam stomp with sonic textures more akin to a subtler Tame Impala. The title came from a childhood game of McCartney's called "Queenie Queenie, who's the got the ball?".


PAUL McCARTNEY
FUH YOU
PAUL McCARTNEY

FUH YOU

CAPITOL, 2018

At 76 on release, Macca raised some eyebrows with the suggestive lyrics of *Egypt Station*'s second single, a more radio-friendly take on the song's original lyric *"I just wanna shag you"*. The song, meanwhile, successfully translated the vibe of "Dance Tonight" into a boyband-style bombast ballad.

PAUL McCARTNEY
FIND MY WAY / WINTER BIRD/WHEN WINTER COMES

FIND MY WAY

CAPITOL, 2020

McCartney III harkened back to both of Paul's previous one-man-band albums, and its lead single touched on the experimentalism of *McCartney II* with its synthetic surf riffs, shuffling electronic drums and tone of a disorientated Beck. Far from the sound of an artist resting on his laurels, this.

ELECTRONICA ALBUMS

Electronic arguments: Macca's covert adventures in ambience, sound collage and mash-up culture. BY LOUIS PATTISON

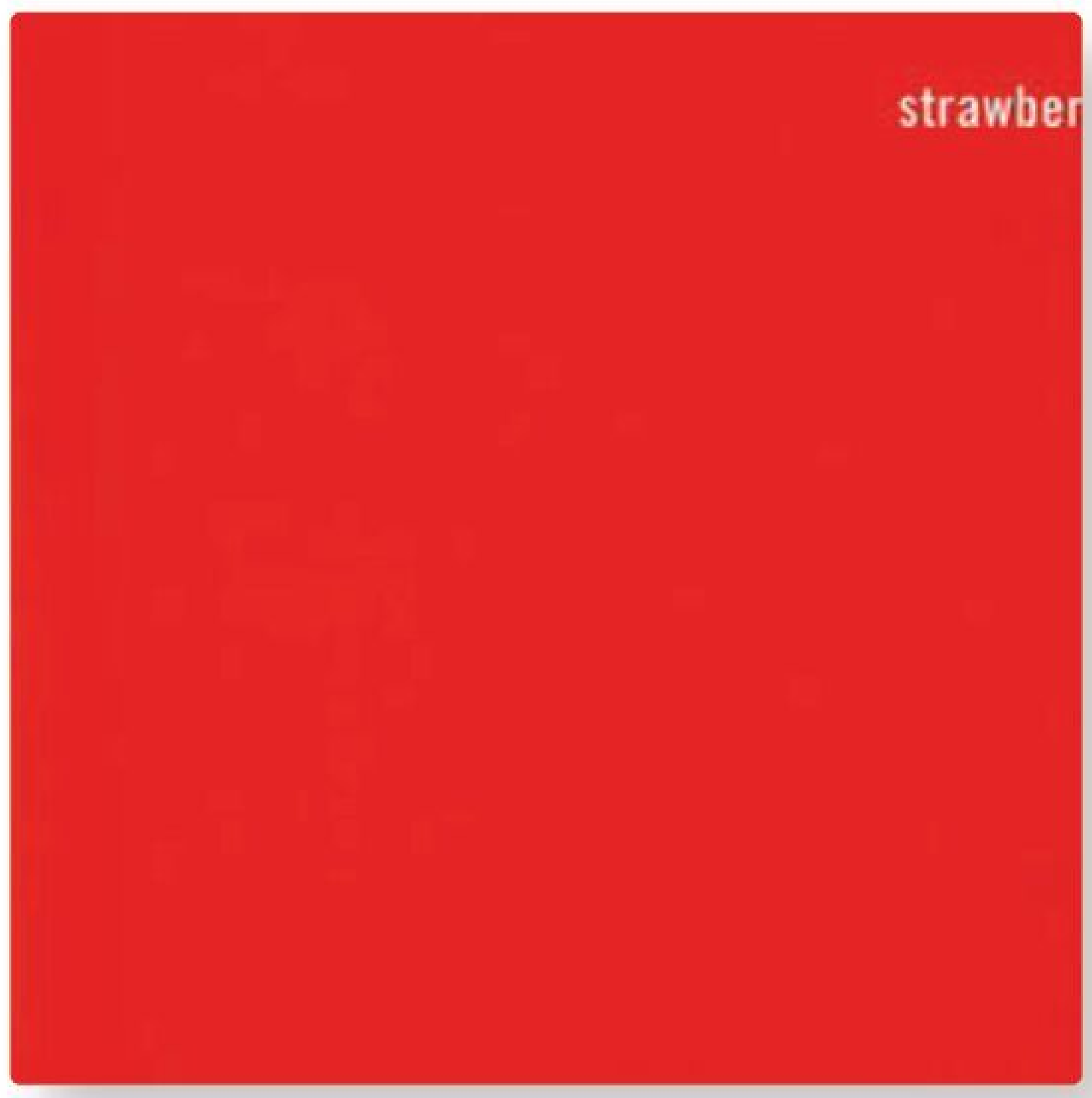
WHILE OFTEN CHARACTERISED as The Beatles' most sentimental voice, Paul McCartney has always been something of an early adopter, curious to new sounds and new techniques. In the mid-'60s you might have caught the Beatle at a "happening" by the eccentric Marxist composer Cornelius Cardew and his free improvisation group AMM, whose performances included transistor radios and the playing of a steam radiator. Come 1979, you'd have found him in his Highlands home studio, poring over an analogue synthesiser and ARP sequencer to craft the rudimentary synth-pop of "Secret Friend". In 1988, as acid house swept the UK in what observers called the Second Summer Of Love, Macca's eye was off the ball: his sole album that year was *Choba B CCCP*. Still, in the years that followed, as dance music showed every sign of being a fixture, not a fad, McCartney's interest was piqued.

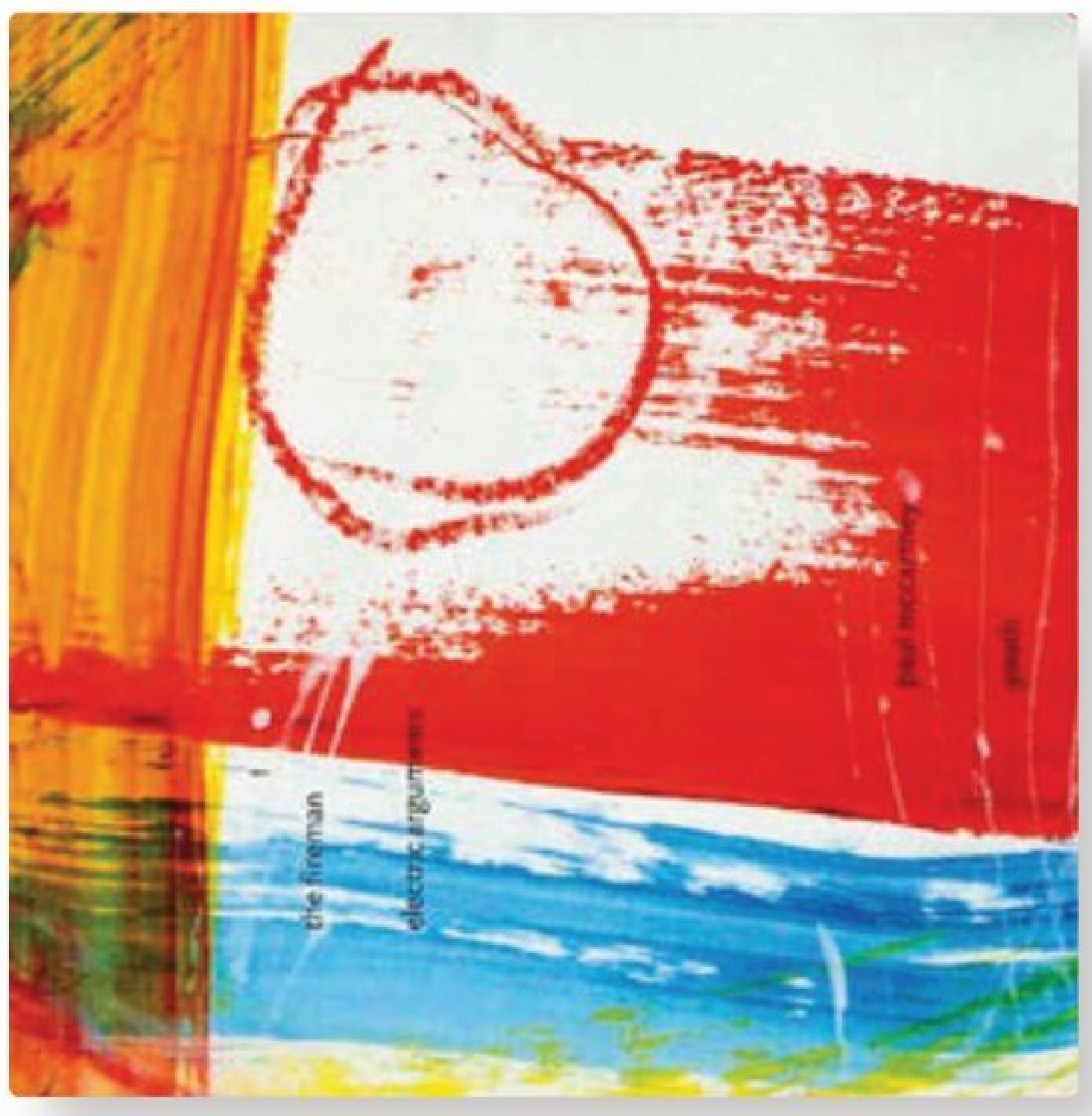
The Fireman began not as a collaboration, but as a remix project. In 1993, McCartney called the producer Youth and invited him to Hog Hill Mill, his home studio in Sussex. Youth – real name, Martin Glover – had begun his career in London post-punk group Killing Joke, but left in 1982, lured away by the myriad possibilities of new studio technology. After a brief stint assisting a production trio named Stock, Aitken And Waterman, Youth joined up with his old schoolfriend and sometime Killing Joke roadie Alex Paterson in The Orb, an ambient house group whose dub-tinted soundscapes – sometimes featuring the Canterbury scene guitarist Steve Hillage – were beloved of ravers in search of a comedown soundtrack. Originally, McCartney's plan was for Youth to take the master tapes of his 1993 album *Off The Ground* and remix them, but Youth, not wanting to turn down the opportunity to work with a Beatle, proposed Macca pull out his Mellotron, harpsichord and flute and add some new parts. Gradually,what was intended as a number of 12-inch remixes became something else: a long-playing album.

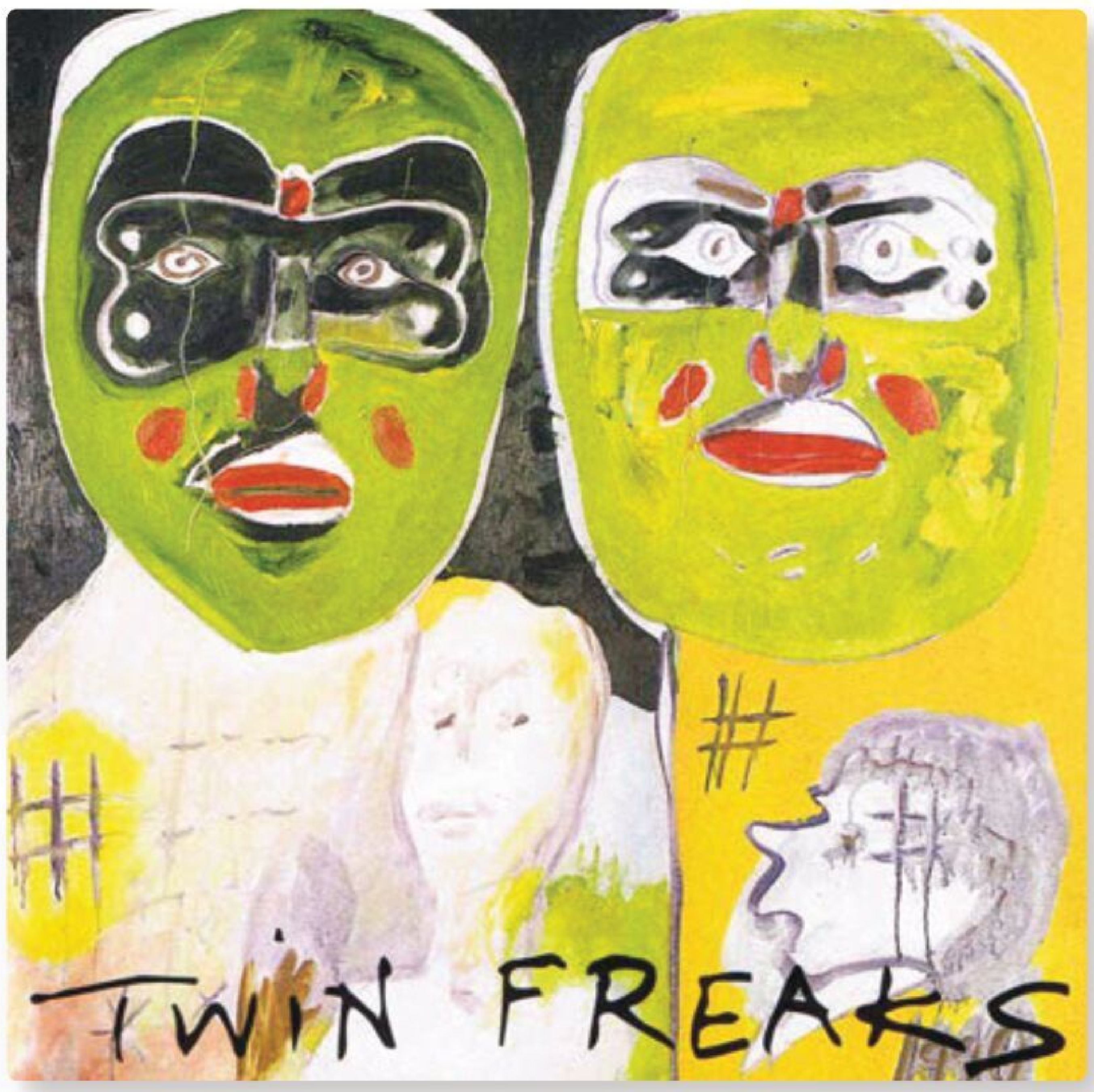
Signs of this uncertain evolution are writ across **Strawberries Oceans Ships Forest** (*1993, Parlophone,* ★★★). Youth's approach is radically deconstructive – as well as material from *Off The Ground*, elements of "Reception" and "The Broadcast" from 1979's *Back To The Egg* are woven in here. With nine tracks clocking in around eight minutes in length, it does feel a bit like a collection of remixes – but its core style, a loping and gently trippy electronica dotted with vocal samples, sounded pretty futuristic in 1993, and still has much to recommend it. "Transpiritual Stomp", a heady shuffle of congas, sequenced synths and rock'n'roll guitar is not a million miles away from something off Primal Scream's *Screamadelica*. Certainly, it wasn't the sort of thing you would imagine a Beatle might come out with, an assertion borne out by the facts. Released uncredited in a minimal red sleeve, *Strawberries Oceans Ships Forest* would pass under the radar until Parlophone, responding to a slow build of speculation, confirmed that this was indeed the work of a Beatle.

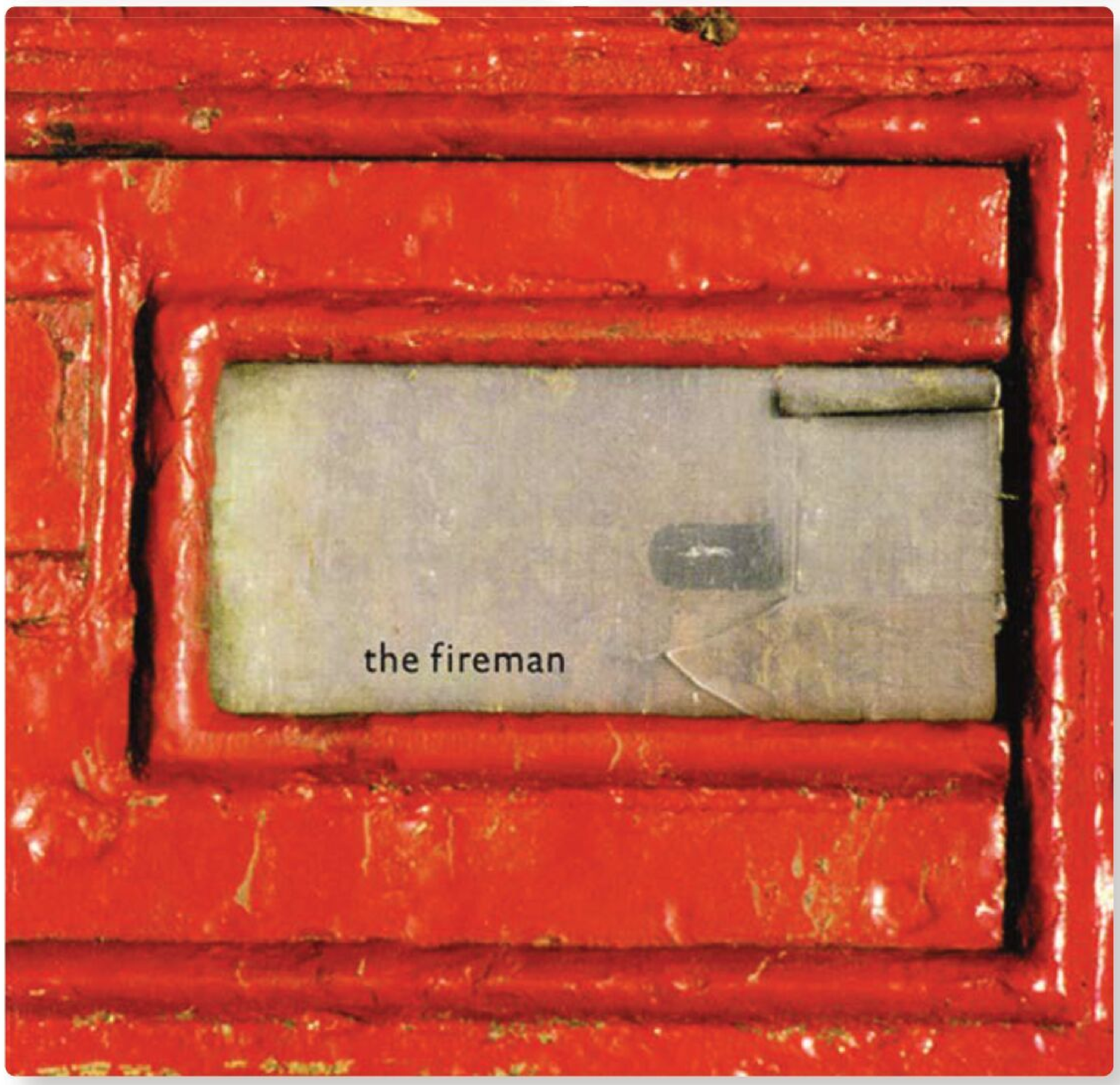
ELECTRIC ARGUMENTS IS UNPREDICTABLE, ADVENTUROUS AND EXCEPTIONAL

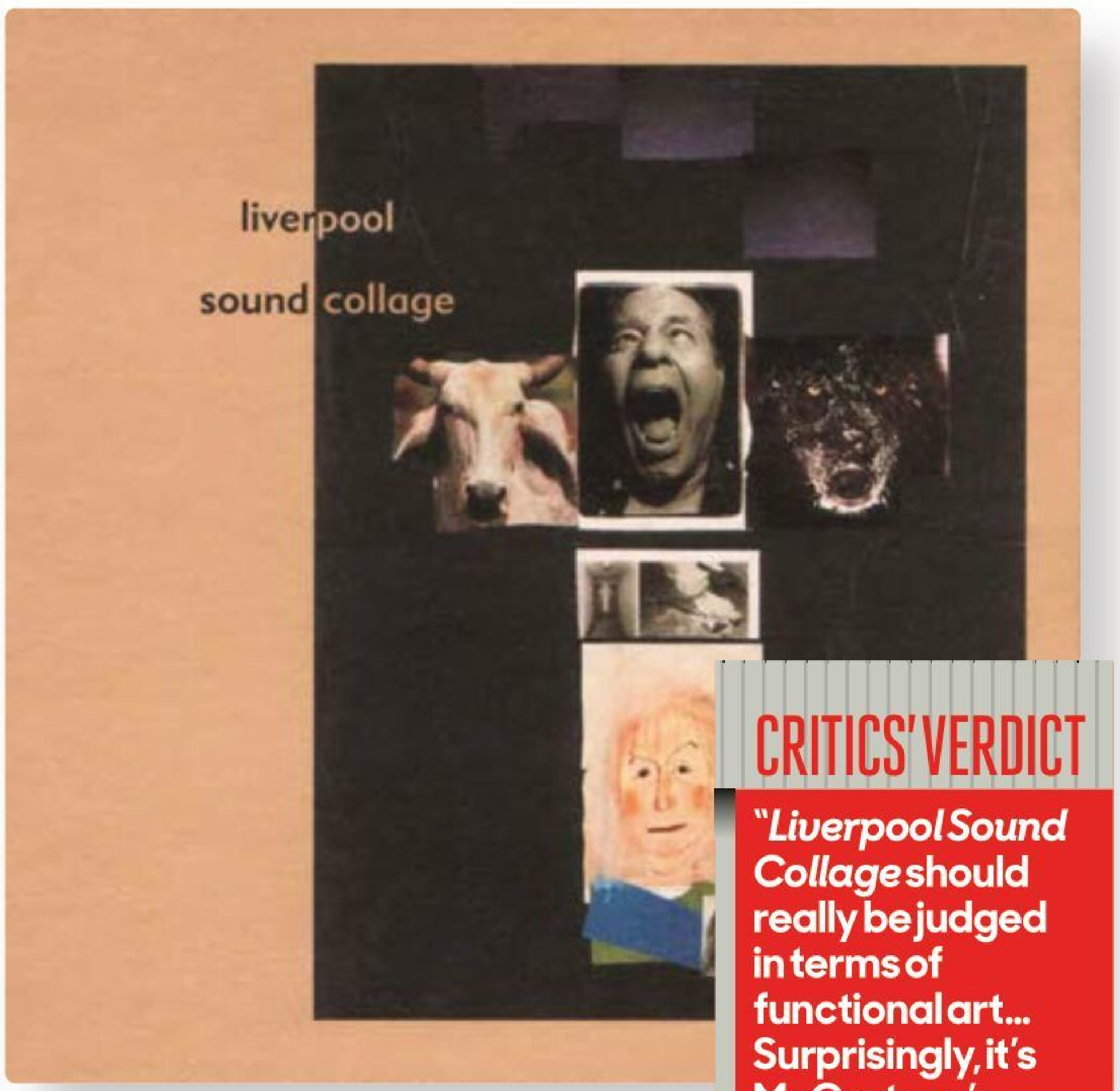
Youth and McCartney reunited a few years later for **Rushes** (1998, *Hydra*, ★★★), an album simultaneously more developed and more low-key than The Fireman's debut. Beautiful opener "Watercolour Guitars" sounds much as its title suggests, turning picked acoustic into pale washes of sound, interrupted only by the occasional backwards cymbal. The new age electronics of "7am" melds spiralling synthesisers and understated strings; listen close around











the six-minute mark and you hear McCartney's voice briefly emerging from the depths. Meanwhile, "Auraveda" – its title apparently derived from the ancient Vedic philosophy of natural medicine – spins a contemplative 13-minute suite out of hand drums and sitar. Perhaps healing was on McCartney's mind; in April of that year, Linda succumbed to breast cancer.

McCartney himself describes The Fireman as a means of liberating himself from studio pressures; a chance to just play, leaving the hassles of composition and construction to another technical wizard. With no prescribed sound in mind, perhaps it's natural that **Electric Arguments** (*2008, One Little Indian,* ★★★★) – the title cribbed from the Allen Ginsberg poem *Kansas City To St Louis* – should differ greatly from its predecessors. Vocal where its predecessors were almost exclusively instrumental, here we find Youth occupying a sort of Brian Eno role, presenting McCartney with conceptual cues – books of poetry, instrumental loops of various flavours – and capturing the results; "improv theatre", as McCartney put it. Despite a rapid genesis – 16 tracks laid down in 13 days – results are good, both in terms of general hit-rate and ground covered. With Macca adopting a Robert Plant yowl on "Nothing Too Much Just Out Of Sight", spinning a wry psychedelic folk tale on "Travelling Light", and trumping Bono with the misty Celtic anthemics of "Sing The Changes", *Electric Arguments* feels both unpredictable and adventurous; a quite exceptional record.

For anyone entranced by the magical properties of the three-minute pop song, the short-lived phenomenon of mash-up culture was a brief but heady joy. One of the chief proponents was Roy Kerr, aka Freelance Hellraiser, whose "A Stroke Of Genie-us" – a skilful splicing of The Strokes and Christina Aguilera – lit up many a dancefloor. McCartney brought Kerr on tour in 2004 to warm up the crowd with a set of cut-and-shut Macca classics, later expanded into a double album vinyl set entitled **Twin Freaks** (*2005, Parlophone,* ★★★). It is true that McCartney mixed with McCartney does not capture the spirit of the mash-up at its bewildering best, but there are some audacious reworkings here, some using unheard master tape material – see *McCartney*'s "Maybe I'm Amazed" and *McCartney II*'s "Coming Up" – plus a take on "Temporary Secretary" that amplifies its oddball energy.

"It's a new little piece of Beatles," said McCartney of **Liverpool Sound Collage** (*2000, Hydra,* ★★), an experimental piece commissioned by the artist Peter Blake, designer of the sleeve of The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Youth is on board; so too are Welsh pop anarchists Super Furry Animals.

Clocking in at 60 minutes, it's more a piece of sonic art than a record: an ambient collage interspersing old session chatter ("Hang on, John's just broken a string"), looped Ringo beats, a snatch of McCartney's 1991 classical piece *Liverpool Oratorio*, and Macca wandering around the streets with a Dictaphone interviewing passers-by. Ultimately, it's something that feels best listened to as an art exhibit, not a record, but it's kind of nice that it exists – a reminder that McCartney was as much a fan of Stockhausen as he was Chuck Berry, or Little Richard.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"*Liverpool Sound Collage* should really be judged in terms of functional art… Surprisingly, it's McCartney's 'Plastic Beetle' that comes off best… Still, not something you would want to devote large chunks of your time and reality to. Cut in. Cut up. Cut out."

NME ON *LIVERPOOL SOUND COLLAGE*, SEPTEMBER 12, 2005

"Depending on which Paul McCartney you like the most, you may or may not like what he's done. But the best thing about *Electric Arguments* is that it sounds like the work of someone who doesn't give a stuff what people are going to think. About time, too.."

PETER PAPHIDES ON THE FIREMAN'S *ELECTRIC ARGUMENTS*, UNCUT, 2008

CLASSICAL ALBUMS

The scores, symphonies, ballets, oratorios and assorted orchestral thrills of Sir Paul McCartney.

BY JOHN LEWIS

IN 1966, WHEN John Lennon was in suburban Surrey, playing board games with his school pals, Paul McCartney was attending classical concerts at the Wigmore Hall with his girlfriend Jane Asher's family.

It was McCartney who had suggested using strings on "Yesterday", "For No One" and "Eleanor Rigby", and who requested the inclusion of a B-flat piccolo trumpet on "Penny Lane" after listening to Bach's second Brandenburg Concerto.

"In the mid-'60s, McCartney patrolled London with his antennae out," says his friend Barry Miles, "omnivorous, wide open for experience." And, over the course of the ensuing half-century, that omnivorous appetite has informed a series of offbeat instrumental and orchestral projects.

The first came in 1966 when, with Lennon away filming *How I Won The War*, McCartney suggested to Brian Epstein that he'd like to write a film soundtrack. Epstein landed him a Boulting brothers kitchen-sink drama starring Hayley Mills and Hywel Bennett, based on a play by Bill Naughton.

Initially credited to the George Martin Orchestra, **The Family Way** (*1967, Decca, 2005 Varese Vintage,* ★★★) is a fascinating period piece. McCartney provides a handful of eight-bar themes (all of which had to be forced out of him by George Martin at the last minute) which Martin reworks in sundry styles: trumpet roundels, pastoral elegies, jazz waltzes and sleazy spy-movie funk, along with a wedding march that would, 35 years later, provide the theme for the ill-fated McCartney-Mills nuptials.

Martin's role as amanuensis set the tone for McCartney's subsequent instrumental projects, where a classically trained arranger would translate his hummed melodies and piano chords for an orchestra. Some regard this as cheating, but it's actually common practice with film composers like Danny Elfman and Hans Zimmer. Even classically trained composers will delegate work to arrangers when they're close to deadline.

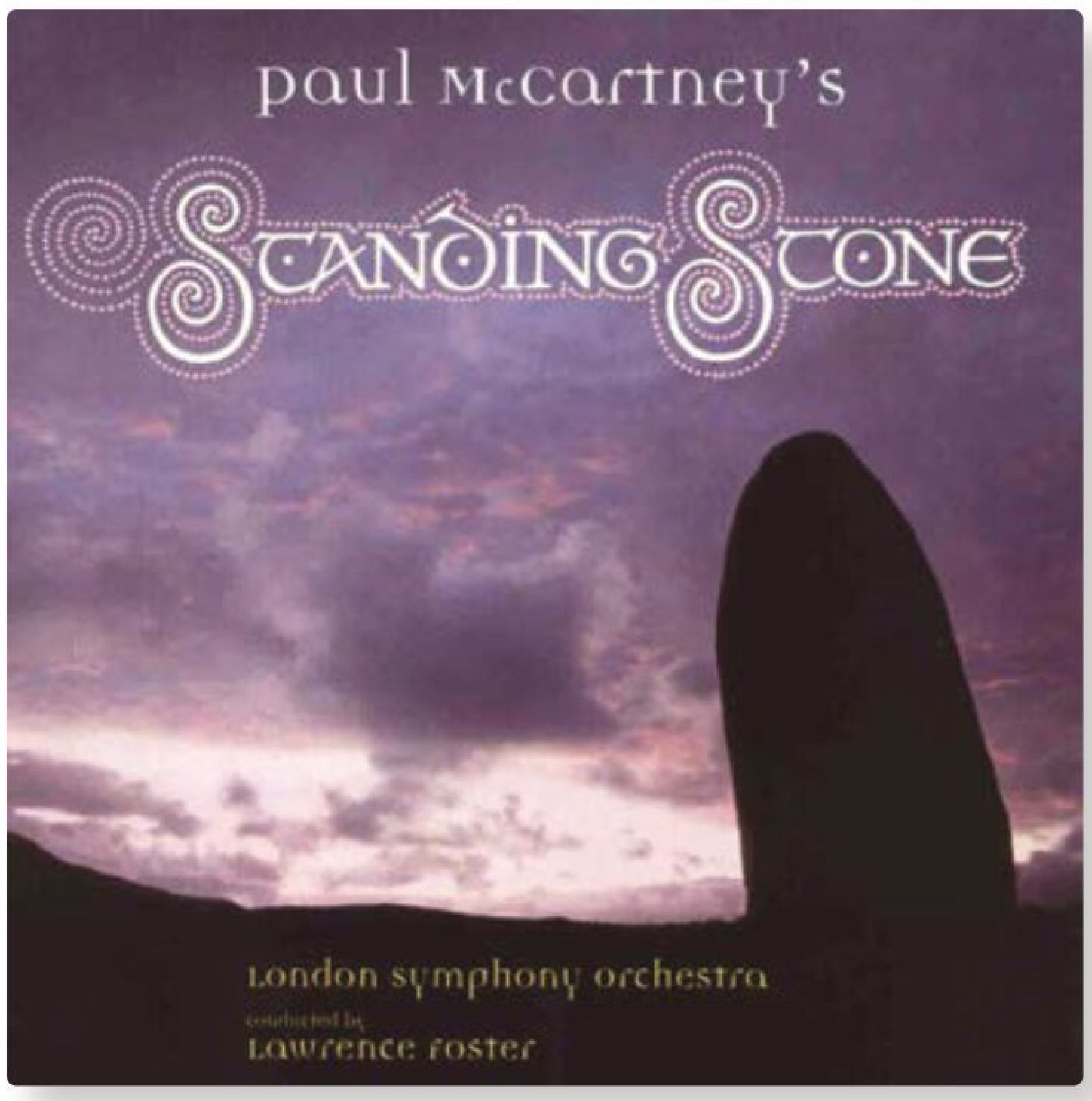
> *OCEAN'S KINGDOM* SEES HIM FINALLY SOUNDING LIKE A PROPER COMPOSER

For **Thrillington** (*1977, Regal Zonophone, 2004, EMI,* ★★★★) the amanuensis was Robert Hewson. Before 1971's *Ram* album had even been finished, McCartney commissioned him to create instrumental versions of each song. Hewson had previously arranged the strings for "The Long And Winding Road" and numerous Apple recordings, but his arrangements here – for strings and horns alongside session legends Herbie Flowers, Clem Cattini and Vic Flick – are far more interesting.

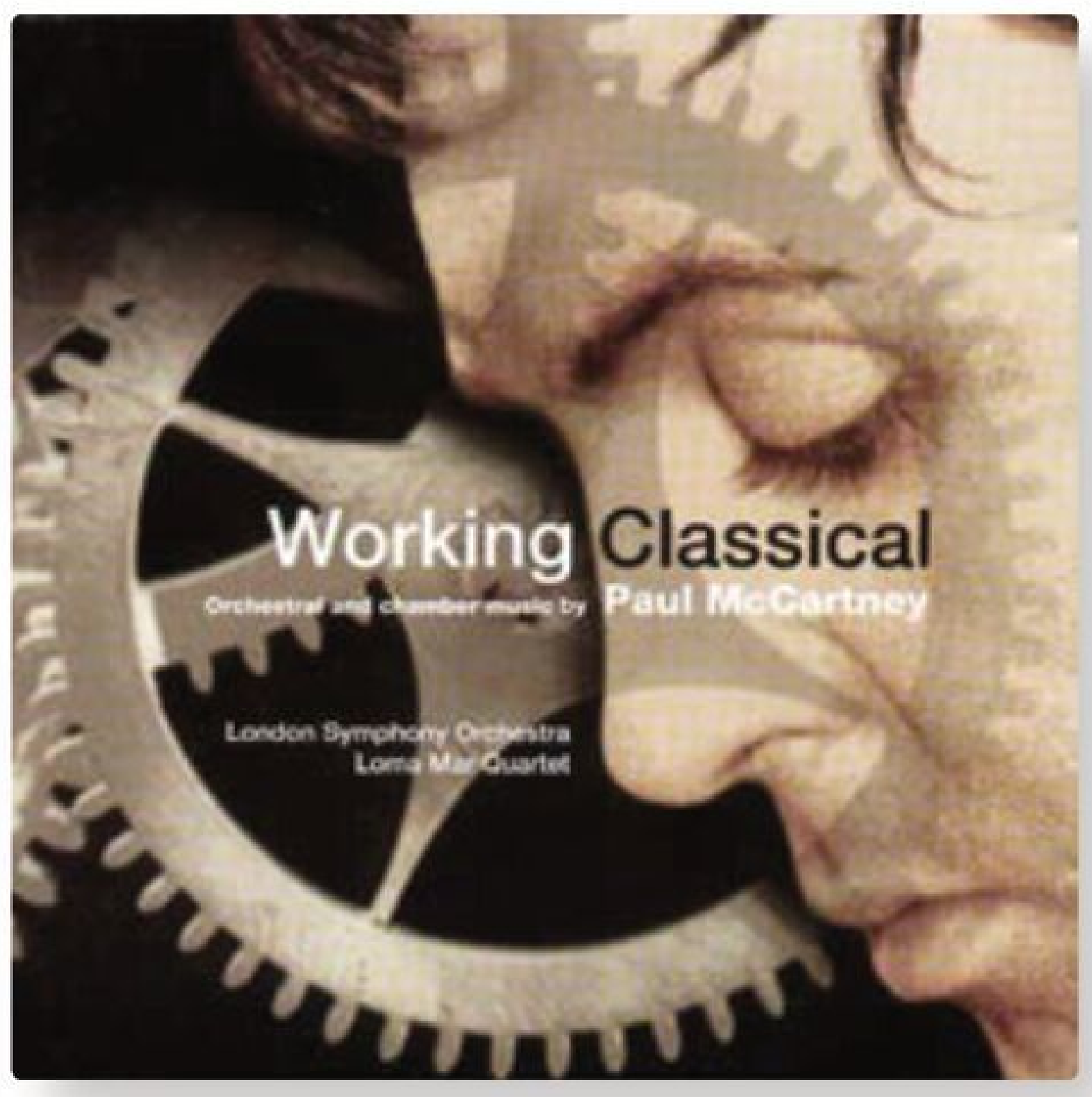
The bluesy "3 Legs" is turned into a Count Basie big-band workout; the Beach Boys stomp of "Dear Boy" is re-upholstered with dreamy Swingle-style harmonies by the Mike Sammes Singers; while the proto-glam of "Eat At Home" is put through the dub chamber. It's "easy listening", but there's a space-age oddness to Hewson's phased drums, *Psycho* strings and growling trumpets that is hugely appealing.

Inexplicably, the album was delayed for six years, with McCartney releasing it at the height of punk under the pseudonym of Percy "Thrills" Thrillington. He even took out a series of classified ads in the *London Evening Standard* to document the movements of this dandy socialite ("After an extended holiday in South America, Mr Thrillington travelled to Newmarket where his condition was causing

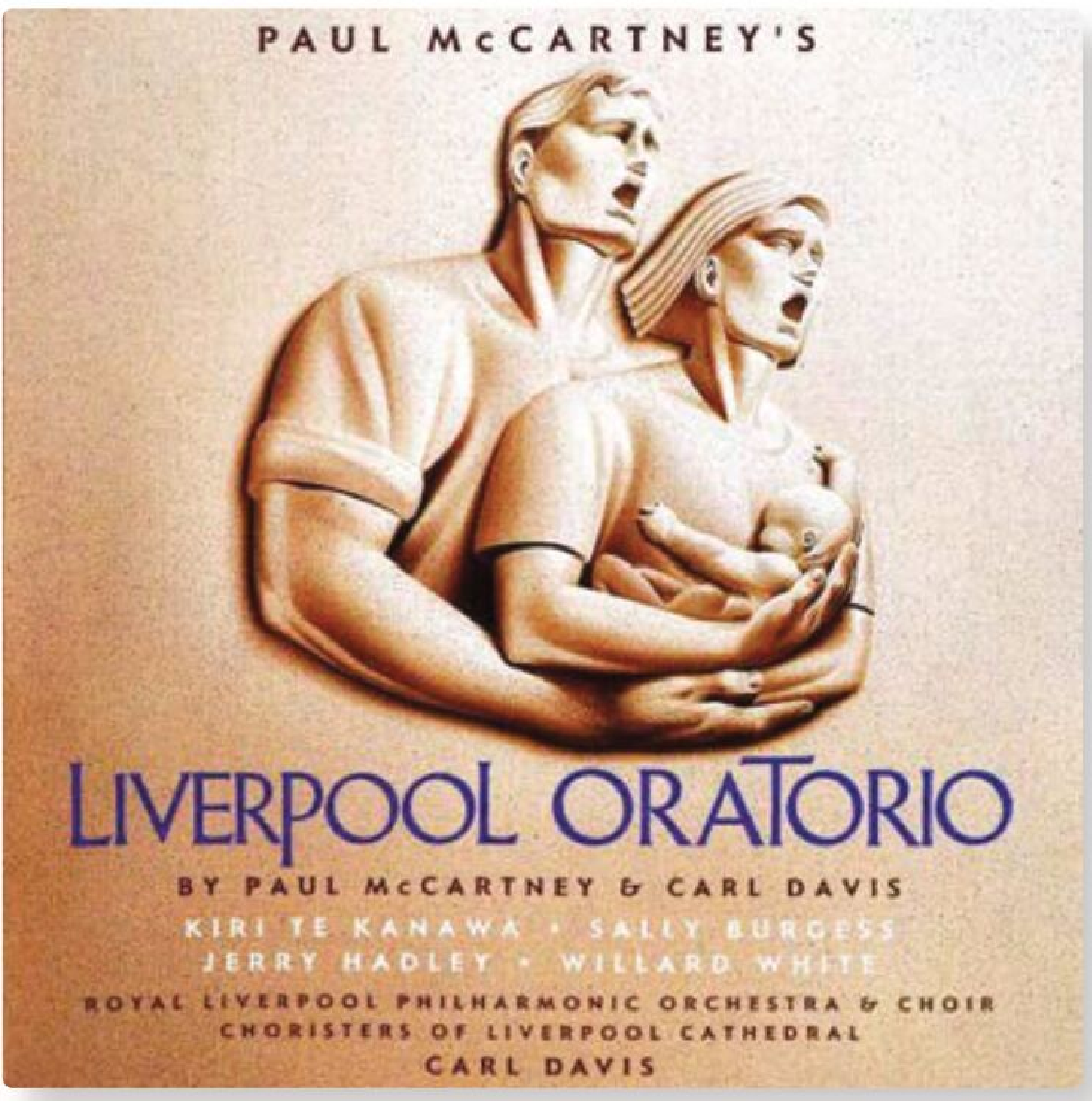
The BOULTING BROTHERS' production
DECCA
THE FAMILY WAY
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK RECORDING
MUSIC COMPOSED BY
Paul McCARTNEY


paul McCartney's
Standing Stone
London symphony orchestra
conducted by
Lawrence Foster

Thrillington


Working Classical
Orchestral and chamber music by Paul McCartney
London Symphony Orchestra
Loma Mar Quartet

PAUL McCARTNEY
Ecce Cor Meum


PAUL McCARTNEY'S
LIVERPOOL ORATORIO
BY PAUL McCARTNEY & CARL DAVIS
KIRI TE KANAWA • SALLY BURGESS
JERRY HADLEY • WILLARD WHITE
ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA & CHOIR
CHORISTERS OF LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL
CARL DAVIS

PAUL McCARTNEY'S
OCEAN'S KINGDOM

grave concern following injuries sustained beneath the thundering hooves of runners in the 3.30. No grapes, by request"). Mr Thrillington's identity was only revealed in 1989, causing all remaining LPs to soar in value.

Fast forward to 1990, when McCartney is enjoying a curious entente with Liverpool, having barely visited the city in decades. He donates to the Institute For Performing Arts, appears at several local hospitals, stars in a promotional video for Liverpool City Council, headlines a huge outdoor gig at the Albert Dock and finds his childhood home turned into a museum. He also accepts a mammoth commission to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Liverpool Philharmonic, in collaboration with veteran score-writer Carl Davis.

The end result, the semi-operatic **Liverpool Oratorio** (*1991, EMI,* ★) received some rapturous standing ovations during its 100-plus performances across 20 countries. One can only assume that audiences greeted McCartney's first foray into the classical world as they would a dog walking on its hind legs, as it's a confused and often excruciating mess. Divided into eight movements – War, School, Crypt, Father, Wedding, Work, Crises, Peace – each with its own leitmotif, it attempts to tell the story cycle of a man who, like McCartney, was born in Liverpool in 1942.

There are two memorable arias: the Nurse's "Do You Know Who You Are" (sung by Sally Burgess) and Sally Dee's "The World You Are Coming Into" (sung by Dame Kiri Te Kanawa). Other moments might provide the basis for a decent *Blood Brothers*-style musical. But the leaden libretto rarely scans (*"Being born where you were born carries with it certain responsibilities"*) while the melodies are too thin to handle the tensions suggested by the plot. McCartney was unconcerned by the critical drubbing. "It's the ordinary folk I listen to," he said. "Neil Kinnock told me it was bloody fantastic."

Subsequent projects have shown steady improvement. **Standing Stone** (1997, EMI Classics, ★★) is a piece in four movements exploring how early Celtic man "might have wondered about the origins of life and the mystery of human existence". There is little internal structure holding these themes together, and we also have the usual clichés one associates with a composer who is still groping his way around the orchestra – storms are indicated by thunderous timpani, rainbows by harps, pastoral scenes by oboes, and so on. But it's a pleasant, melody-rich piece where the wordless, awestruck vocals are not hindered by a libretto.

A pun on "working class" that only works in a northern accent, **Working Classical** (*1999, EMI Classics,* ★★★) is the sound of bets being hedged. Here the Lorna Mar Quartet and the London Symphony Orchestra perform five Debussy-ish originals alongside arrangements of nine earlier McCartney songs. The chamber settings of "My Love" and "Maybe I'm Amazed" effectively tug at the heart strings, while the re-readings of more obscure numbers, such as "Calico Skies" and "Somedays" (from 1997's *Flaming Pie*) and "Golden Earth Girl" (from 1993's *Off The Ground*) certainly encourage you to re-evaluate the originals.

Latin for "behold my heart", **Ecce Cor Meum** (*2006, EMI Classics,* ★★★) is a devotional, choral piece in four movements, written after the death of Linda. It's far more coherent than the *Liverpool Oratorio*, with a second movement ("Gratia") that sees McCartney marrying strong melodies with a widescreen orchestral ambition.

Ocean's Kingdom (*2011, EMI,* ★★★) is the score to Peter Martins' production for the New York City Ballet, a sub-aquatic *Romeo & Juliet* where McCartney – perhaps unwisely – started to make suggestions about story, staging and choreography. The music, however – divided into four, 15-minute movements – is a mix of John Williams bombast and Stravinsky modernism that sees McCartney finally sounding like a proper composer.

McCartney in 2000: cool, calm and collectable

LIVE AND LET BUY!

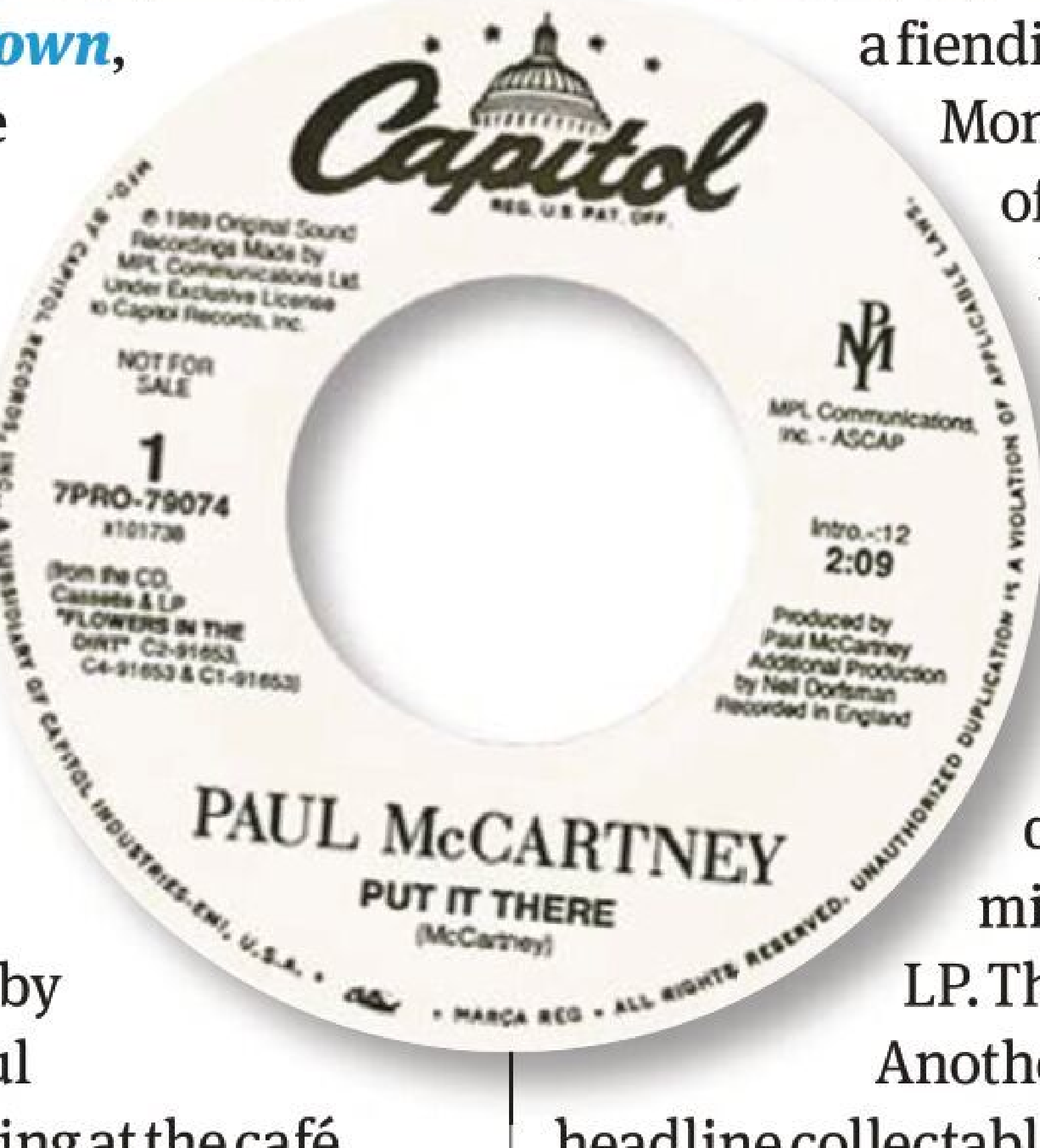
A brief guide to McCartney memorabilia

DAVE HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES. WORDS: MARK BENTLEY

YOU WON'T NEED to be told that McCartney is one of the most collectable artists ever. But what people collect, and the prices they fetch, may surprise you. Spot the connection: a 1960 handwritten letter from Macca to a 'mystery drummer' inviting him to audition for The Beatles (sold: £35,000). A handwritten poem, from Paul to Spike Milligan, written in the late '80s, and signed "Yesterday's Man" (sold for £6,000). The battered front door of McCartney's childhood home at 20 Forthlin Road, Allerton (auctioned at Christie's in 2014, and sold for £7,000).

When it comes to collecting McCartney, it's the stuff with the clear (and provable!) personal connection that carries the weight.

While it is unlikely you have handwritten lyrics or Macca-penned poetry in your collection, items even briefly touched by the hand of Sir Paul carry a premium. One of Paul's own 'personal' copies of ***Please Please Me***, on the hyper-desirable gold Parlophone label, and supported by a signed Letter Of Authenticity, sold for $5,000 in January 2017. Slightly down that food chain, an authenticated copy of ***Press To Play*** – won as a competition prize on Bruno Brookes' Radio 1 show in '86, and with BBC-ratified provenance – made more than £600 in 2013. Your prized copy of ***London Town***, if signed, might be worth £60+. But get this: in 2008, one bloke actually sold his Macca-signed marriage certificate on eBay. That made £500, a price certainly assisted by the backstory: Paul signed it while sitting at the café in Luton airport in 1968, while the seller and his wife were about to go on honeymoon. ("We're divorced. You can now own this, but the wife does not come with it," the seller added, drily.)

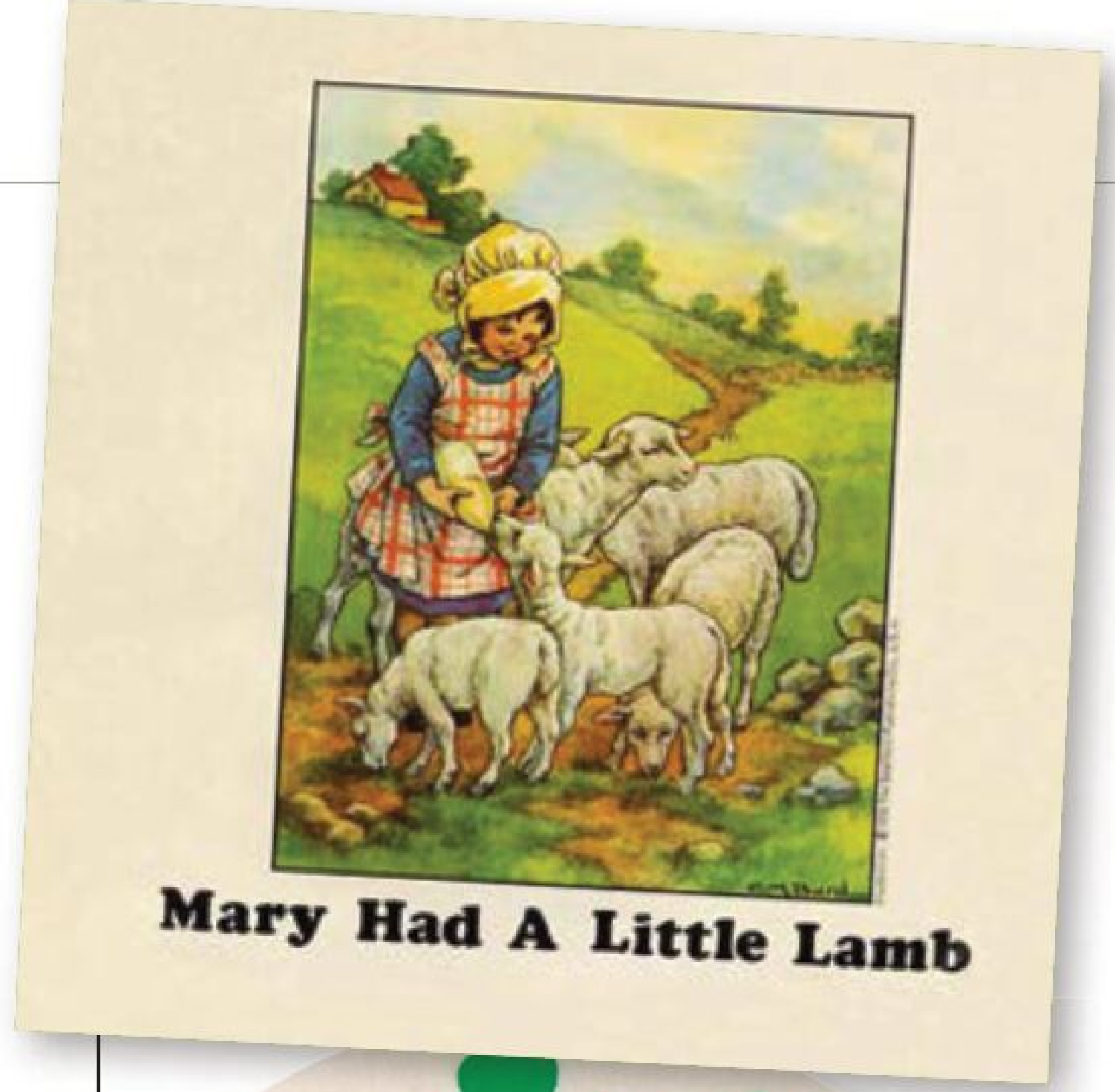


There is so much Macca 'product' out there that it's the unusual items that spark interest.

The rule certainly applies to McCartney's music itself (we'll focus on solo-era stuff here; collecting Beatles records is an academic discipline in its own right). 2016 saw a really big-hitting item: a fiendishly rare Monaural promo of 1971's ***Ram***. Pressed by Capitol in LA, and intended for AM radio stations only, it has a completely different mono mix to the standard LP. The price? $11,000. Another famous headline collectable is the ***Back To The Egg*** in-house promo picture disc from 1979. Only 100 or so copies were produced, and its estimated value is £1,000+. Ditto the 7" US Capitol Records promo of 1989's ***"Put It There"***. This was withdrawn from release, and most copies were destroyed – that's why one sold in 2013 for an astonishing $5,000. Acetates are highly prized: master copies of ***McCartney*** and ***Band On The Run***, as an example, hold a value of around $1,000 each. Press kits and promotion bobbins help drive collectability. Exhibit A would be the ***Flowers In The Dirt World Tour pack***: a 7" one-sided "Party Party", with wallet, postcard and family tree. The price for this item has doubled in the past five years, and a copy sold for £120 in spring 2017.

The 'alias' releases are still highly collectable: a decent copy of ***Thrillington*** should make £300, and The Fireman's ***Rushes*** and ***Electric Arguments*** – in their vinyl box set incarnation – may fetch similar. The Country Hams' ***"Walking In The Park With Eloise"*** 45 is much less desirable, but still a nice collectable that turns up regularly.

Some good news if all you have is bog-standard Macca records. The most wanted items are inevitably the early ones. The non-album Apple-label singles ***"Mary Had A Little Lamb"*** (with cute sleeve) and ***"Give Ireland Back To The Irish"*** (with its shamrock label) are particularly sought after. Macca and Wings albums – once a bargain bin staple – are rising in value by the year. ***McCartney***, ***Wild Life***, ***Ram*** –


Mary Had A Little Lamb

R5936
7YCE 21927
Northern Songs Ltd.
Copyright also claimed by Kidney Punch Music
An Apple Record
Mfd in UK ℗ 1972
All Rights of the Manufacturer and of the Owner of the Recorded Work Reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance, Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited.
Give Ireland back to the Irish
(McCartney and McCartney)
Produced by the McCartneys
Wings

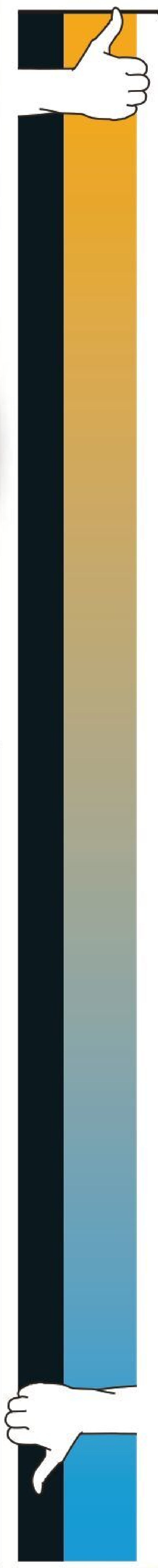
expect to pay £30+ for mint copies, more if they are sealed.

Although not in the same league as Beatles first pressings, albums you couldn't have given away a few years back are now creeping up in value. A mint copy of ***Band On The Run*** with poster is worth £30, give or take; the limited-run 1984 audiophile Nimbus-cut version much more at £300+. Astonishingly, spanking first-press copies of ***Pipes Of Peace*** have broken the £150 barrier – proving the golden rule... condition is all. Now, where did I put my unplayed picture disc of ***"We All Stand Together"?*** – worth a heartening £15+, and in its rarer 'uncut' form, copies have sold for an impressive £200.

Polaroid Snapshots

Below: the poster that came with original copies of *Band On The Run*

THE MACCA COLLECT-O-METER

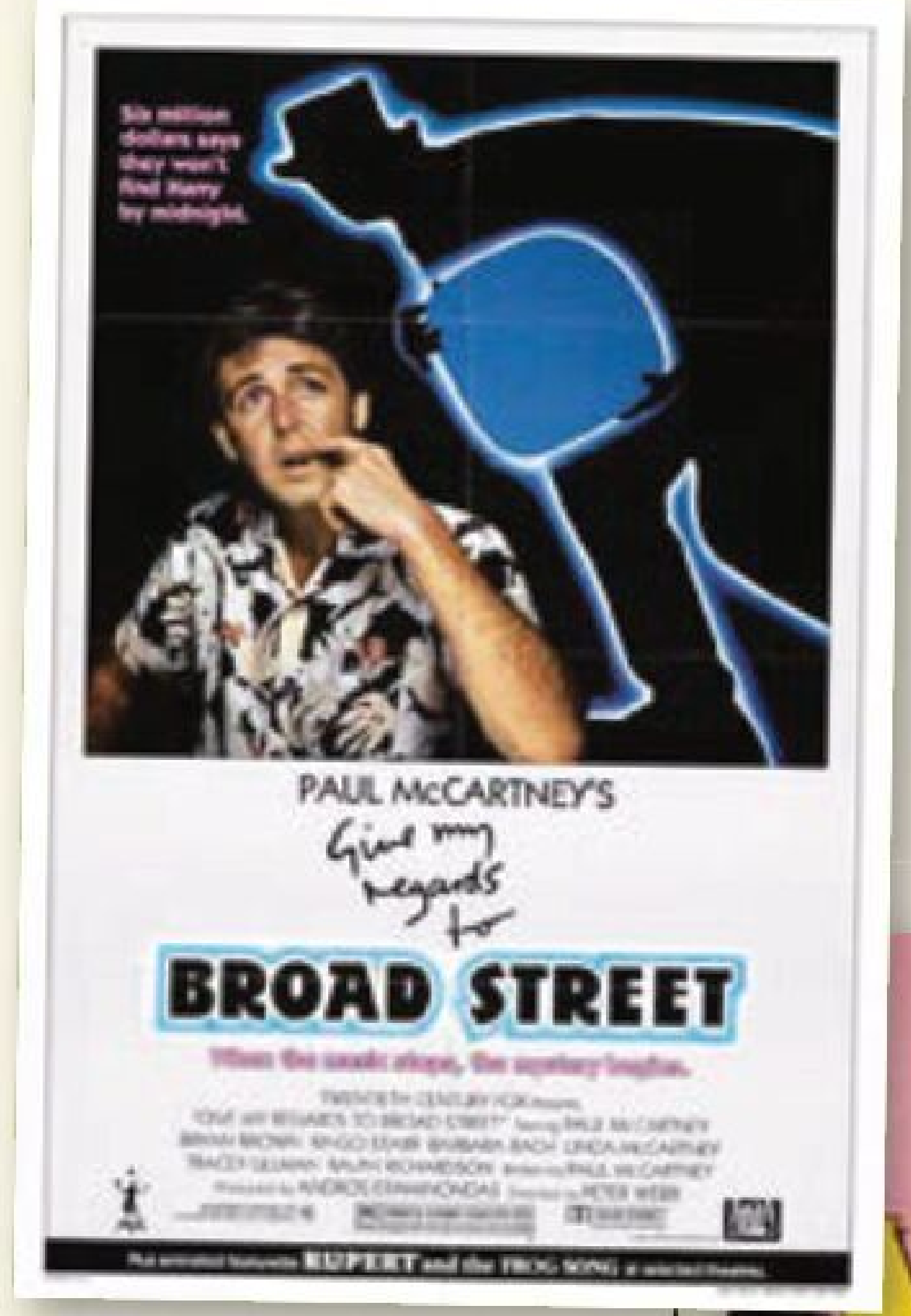


- **AUTHENTICATED AUTOGRAPHED ITEMS**
- **PROMO, WITHDRAWN AND ODD ITEMS**
- **ALIAS RELEASES ON VINYL** *(Thrillington, Fireman)*
- **ANY APPLE RELEASES ON VINYL IN MINT CONDITION**
- **VINTAGE T-SHIRTS, PROGRAMMES AND TICKET STUBS**
- **LATER WINGS/ SOLO ALBUMS** *Must be mint condition or unplayed*
- **GREATEST HITS COMPILATIONS**
- **BOG STANDARD ISSUE CDS**
- **PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING ON CASSETTE**
- **THE MULL OF KINTYRE 7"** *It sold kazillions*
- **THAT VHS OF RUPERT AND THE FROG SONG...**

A McCARTNEY VIDEOGRAPHY

ROCKSHOW
November 1980
Glamorous visual reminder of the 1976 Wings Over America tour, produced by Miramax's Bob and Harvey Weinstein.

GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET
October 1984
He acts! He sings! He produces! This flawed rock folly remains essential viewing.


Six million dollars says they won't find Harry by midnight.
PAUL McCARTNEY'S
Give my regards to
BROAD STREET
RUPERT and the FROG SONG

GET BACK
October 1991
Brilliant live doc of the '90/'91 world tour, heavy on the Beatles material, and directed by Richard *'Help!'* Lester.

PAUL IS LIVE
November 1993
A 21-track video version of the 1993 New World Tour LP. A provocative pre-concert film shows graphic footage of animal testing.

LIVE AT THE CAVERN CLUB!
June 2001
Joyous 45-minute film of the late '99 *Run Devil Run*-era gig. Material majors on '50s covers, alongside a snorting "I Saw Her Standing There". That Dave Gilmour is pretty good.

STANDING STONE
January 2000
The full four movements of his '97 'symphonic poem' with the LSO, plus Making Of doc.

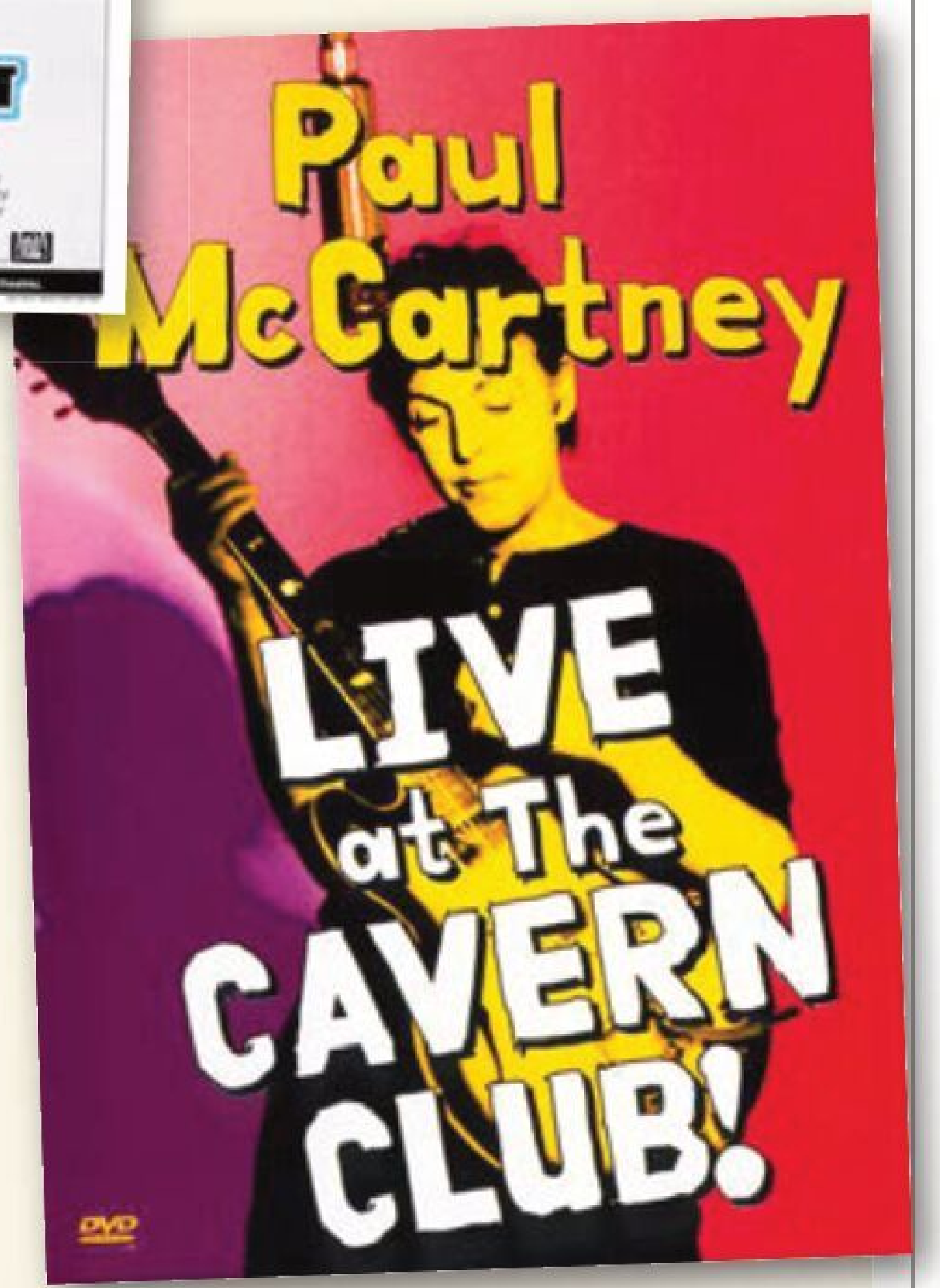
BACK IN THE US
March 2003
A 29-track live extravaganza, culled from 2002's Driving USA Tour, with Beatles-heavy setlist.

THE MUSIC AND ANIMATION COLLECTION
September 2004
A 43-minute selection of animated tales, with original Macca music. Includes *Tropic Island Hum* and *Rupert And The Frog Song.*

PUT IT THERE
November 2004
Tidy behind-the-scenes analysis of the making of *Flowers In The Dirt*; Costello's presence is a boon.

PAUL McCARTNEY IN RED SQUARE
June 2005
Bootleg-beating documentary of gigs in Moscow and St Petersburg. Cleverly spliced with interviews with Russian punters, who lament life as a Beatles fan before the fall of the Iron Curtain.

THE SPACE WITHIN US
November 2006
Concert film from the Chaos & Creation tour. Noted for inclusion of "English Tea", a live wake-up call to the International Space Station, broadcast from a gig in Anaheim.


Paul McCartney
LIVE at The CAVERN CLUB!
DVD

THE McCARTNEY YEARS
November 2007
Completist catnip: career-spanning comp of videos, key live shows (Live Aid, Glasto) and more.

GOOD EVENING NEW YORK CITY
November 2009
Summer 2009 gigs from CitiField – right across from the old Shea Stadium site. Initially released exclusively through Starbucks.

PAUL McCARTNEY'S LIVE KISSES
November 2012
DVD/Blu-ray issue of *Kisses On The Bottom*-era material, originally streamed free as *iTunes Live From Capitol Studios.*

ALL THE BEST?

The compilation albums

WINGS GREATEST

WINGS GREATEST

1978 ★★★

Long a charity-shop staple, this 12-track set was/is a serviceable round-up of early solo hits – notable for non-album singles "Junior's Farm" and the Beeb-banned "Hi Hi Hi".

ALL THE BEST

1987 ★★★

A luxury two-vinyl package that supersedes the above, adds the '80s big pop moments, and the frogs. Contains his last solo UK Top 10 hit – the misty-eyed, festive "Once Upon A Long Ago".

WINGSPAN: HITS AND HISTORY **2001**

★★★★

Beloved of Alan Partridge, this methodically ordered double set stays true to its title. Disc 1 recycles the big numbers, while the second adds contextual album cuts, DJ edits and curios: "Daytime Nighttime Suffering", take a bow!

PURE McCARTNEY

2016 ★★★★

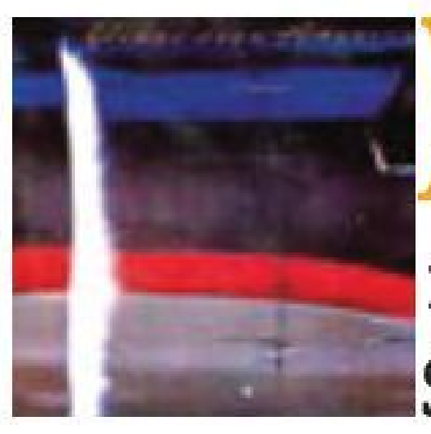
The most recent compilation is surely the best: a four-disc, mixtape-style journey through a labyrinthine catalogue, promoted by Macca himself as a "musical adventure". Notable for its inclusion of less heralded LP cuts, Fireman material, and other post-2000 goodies.

KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/GETTY IMAGES

Live at the 56th Grammy Awards show, the Staples Center, LA, 2014

LIVE AND LET LIVE!

The McCartney concert and live albums



WINGS OVER AMERICA

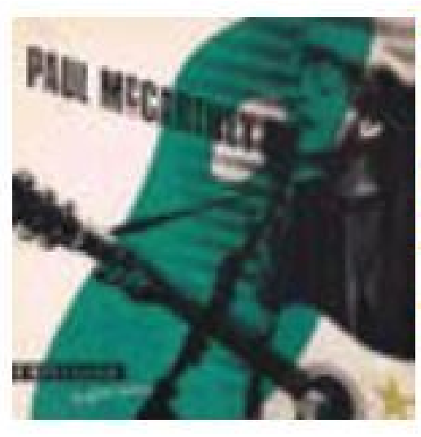
1976 ★★★★

Sumptuous, ubiquitous three-disc celebration that did a fine job of positioning Wings as a '70s hit machine. The deluxe 2013 remaster offered diehards a bonus disc, *Live At The Cow Palace*.

TRIPPING THE LIVE FANTASTIC

1990 ★★★

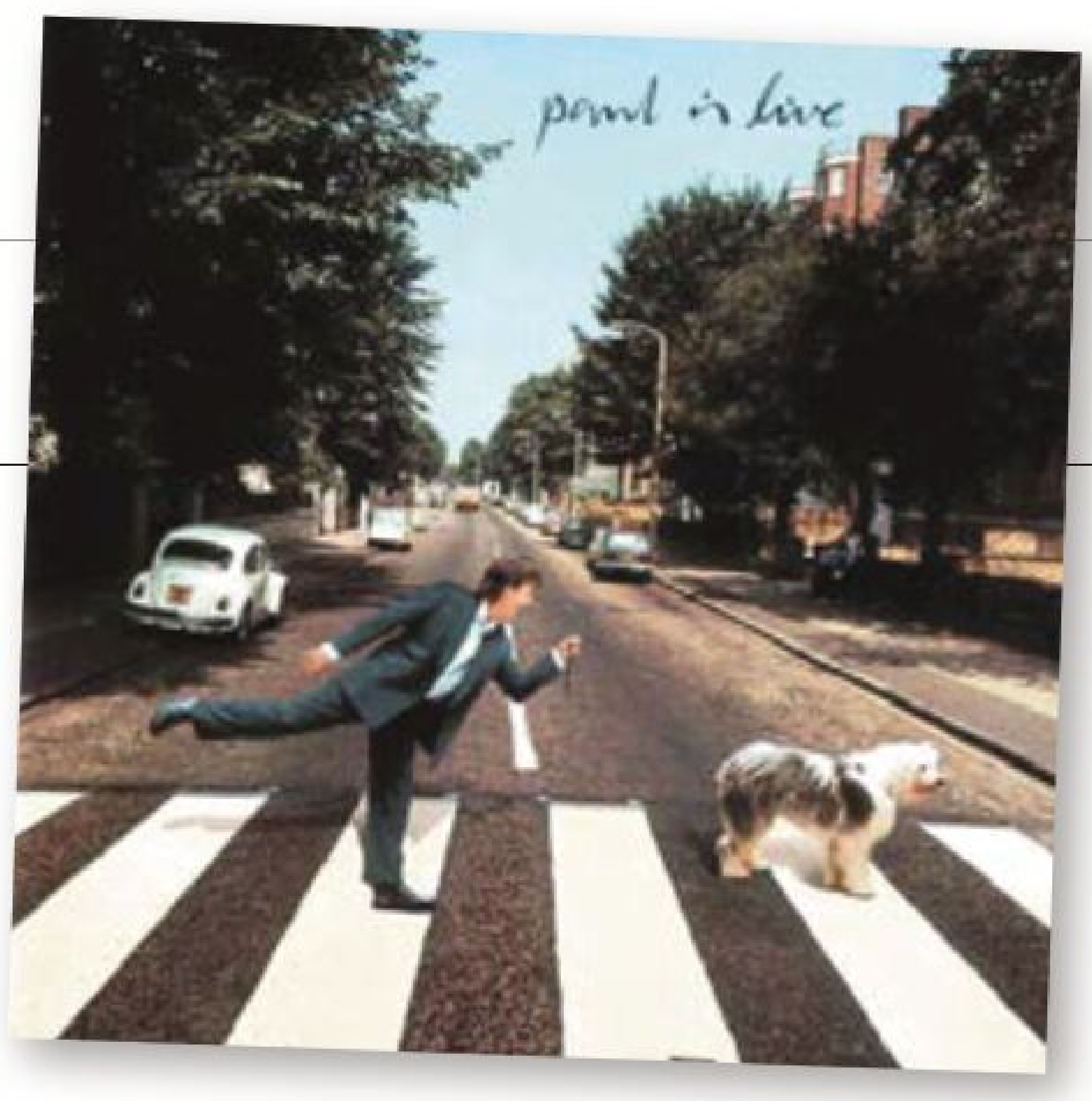
First solo official live effort, culled from the '89-'90 world tour. Seamlessly mixes material from *Flowers In The Dirt*, and gets back to Beatles-era material, too.



UNPLUGGED (THE OFFICIAL BOOTLEG)

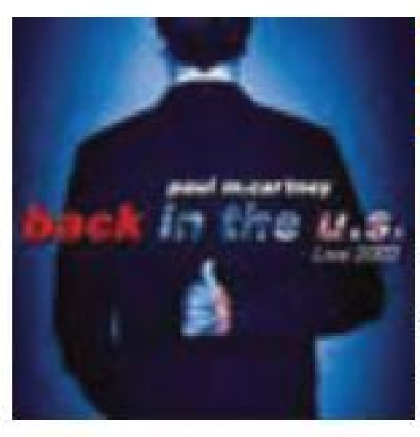
1991 ★★★

Then-voguish acoustic offering, as part of the MTV franchise. Some spirited '50s rock'n'roll tributes segue into gentle Beatles stuff, and a leftfield cover of "Ain't No Sunshine".



PAUL IS LIVE **1993** ★★

The in-gag title and knowing *Abbey Road* sleeve parody offer a reflection of the content: versions of Beatles, Wings and solo stuff, alongside poignant covers and general onstage japery.



BACK IN THE US **2002** ★★★

Joyous double live album to celebrate the Driving USA Tour. The setlist is seriously Beatlesy – Macca controversially reversing the Lennon-McCartney credit on the packaging. George tribute "Something", on ukulele, is charming. The edited highlights were available on 2003's *Back In The World*.

GOOD EVENING NEW YORK CITY

2009 ★★★

Sprawling, Grammy-winning souvenir, and a calling card for the live Macca experiences of more recent years. Fun singalongs ahoy!

AMOEBA GIG

2019 ★★★

The full version of Paul's secret gig at Amoeba records in San Francisco in 2007, which had been released in bits and pieces for the previous 10 years.

PAUL AT THE CONTROLS

Macca's production work

BONZO DOG DOO-DAH BAND TADPOLES **1969**

As Apollo C Vermouth; produced "I'm The Urban Spaceman".

MARY HOPKIN THOSE WERE THE DAYS **1972**

Produced entire album.

BADFINGER MAGIC CHRISTIAN MUSIC **1970**

"Come And Get It", "Rock Of All Ages" and "Carry On Til Tomorrow".

McGEAR McGEAR **1974**

Produced entire album; Wings feature as backing band.

MAGIC CHRISTIAN MUSIC BY BADFINGER

THE SCAFFOLD SOLD OUT **1975**

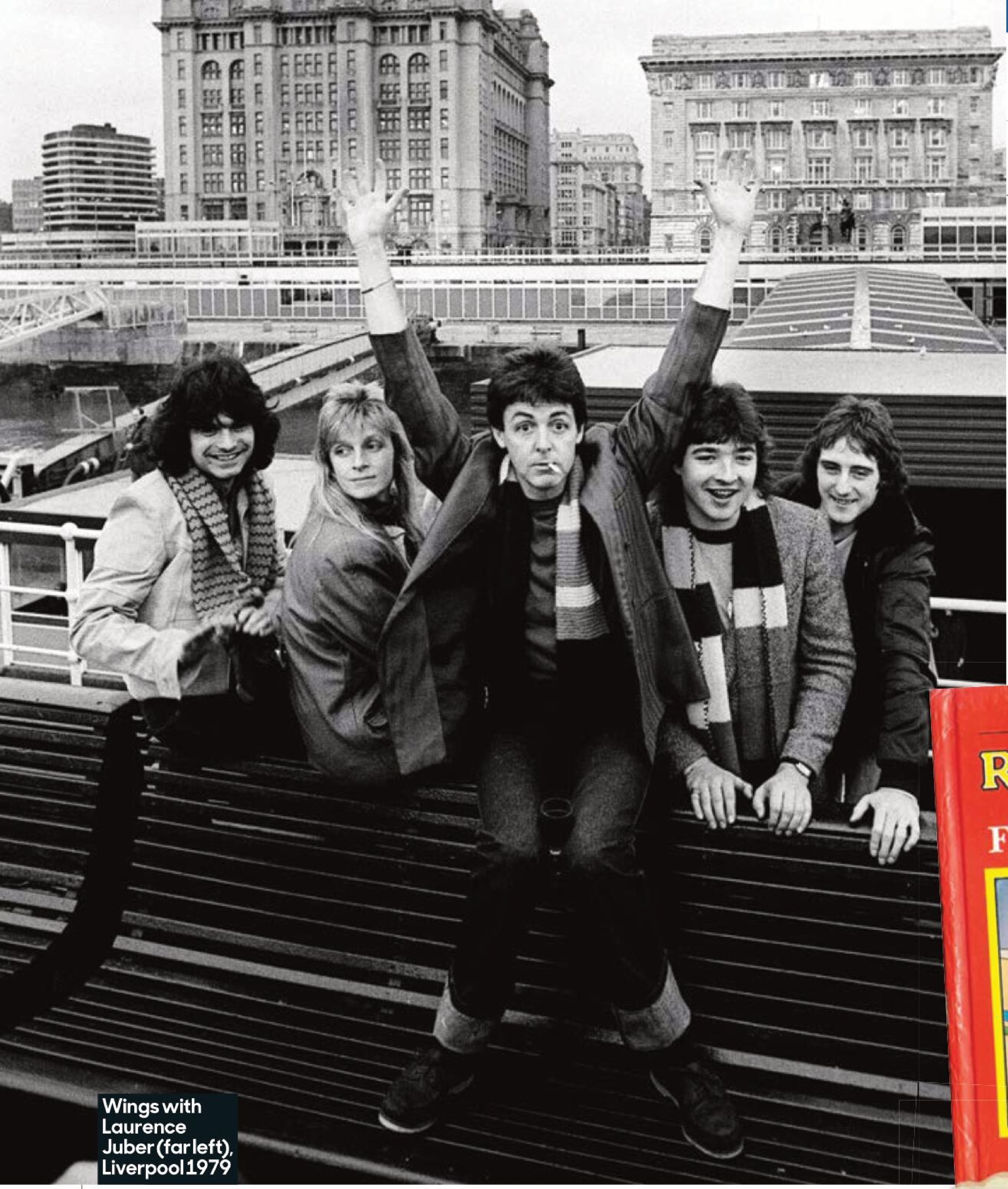
Wings feature as backing band on "Liverpool Lou".

DENNY LAINE HOLLY DAYS **1977**

Macca produces/plays on entire LP.

LINDA McCARTNEY WIDE PRAIRIE **1998**

Anthology; Paul produces and plays much of the instrumentation.



Wings with Laurence Juber (far left), Liverpool 1979

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

"We All Stand Together" – the story of Macca's most hated song

HOW COULD A Beatle betray us so? For many fans, "We All Stand Together" by Paul McCartney & The Frog Chorus is the nadir, the cloying embarrassment, the moment his love of sentimentality went way too far. But are we missing the point?

It's a kids' song for a kids' film, and Paul's honourable intention to make 'Rupert Bear: The Musical' goes back an awfully long way. In fact, it was one of the first projects he threw himself into after the legal dissolution of The Beatles. The story goes like this: in early 1971, MPL acquired the rights to a film version of the *Daily Express* comic – first created by Mary Tourtel in 1920 – and Macca began work almost immediately. The earliest earmarked track for the project was "Little Lamb Dragonfly", recorded during sessions for *Ram* in 1971, but not receiving a release until 1973's *Red Rose Speedway*. McCartney's vision for his little bear was ambitious, and the project inevitably stalled. In May 1975, Macca told *Melody Maker*: "I've got a big plan to do Rupert. My idea is to make the annuals move and have them talk… [*Rupert is*] far out, and psychedelic."

Paul McCartney's
RUPERT
and the
FROG SONG
WE ALL STAND TOGETHER

We never got to experience that grand spectacle. Five years later, in October 1980, work began on "We All Stand Together", with George Martin producing. The song's progress was the catalyst for filming *Rupert And The Frog Song*, produced by MPL. Despite taking three years to complete, the finished product was just 13 minutes long, and stars Macca as Rupert, Windsor Davies voicing his father and – of course! – June Whitfield as his mother. It was released in theatres as the warm-up short to accompany *Give My Regards To Broad Street*, but far greater exposure followed. Buoyed by its video, "We All Stand Together" peaked at No 3 at Christmas '84, and received another Yuletide release a year later. It's no *Bambi*, frankly, but the film itself received a Grammy nomination, won a BAFTA for Best Animated Short, and would go on to become the biggest selling video of 1985.

A kids' song for a kids' film. You need to watch it again. Find *Rupert And The Frog Song* on the *Music & Animation Collection* DVD; on second-hand VHS on eBay for about 90p; or amateurishly transferred to YouTube for nowt. You know what they say – context is everything.

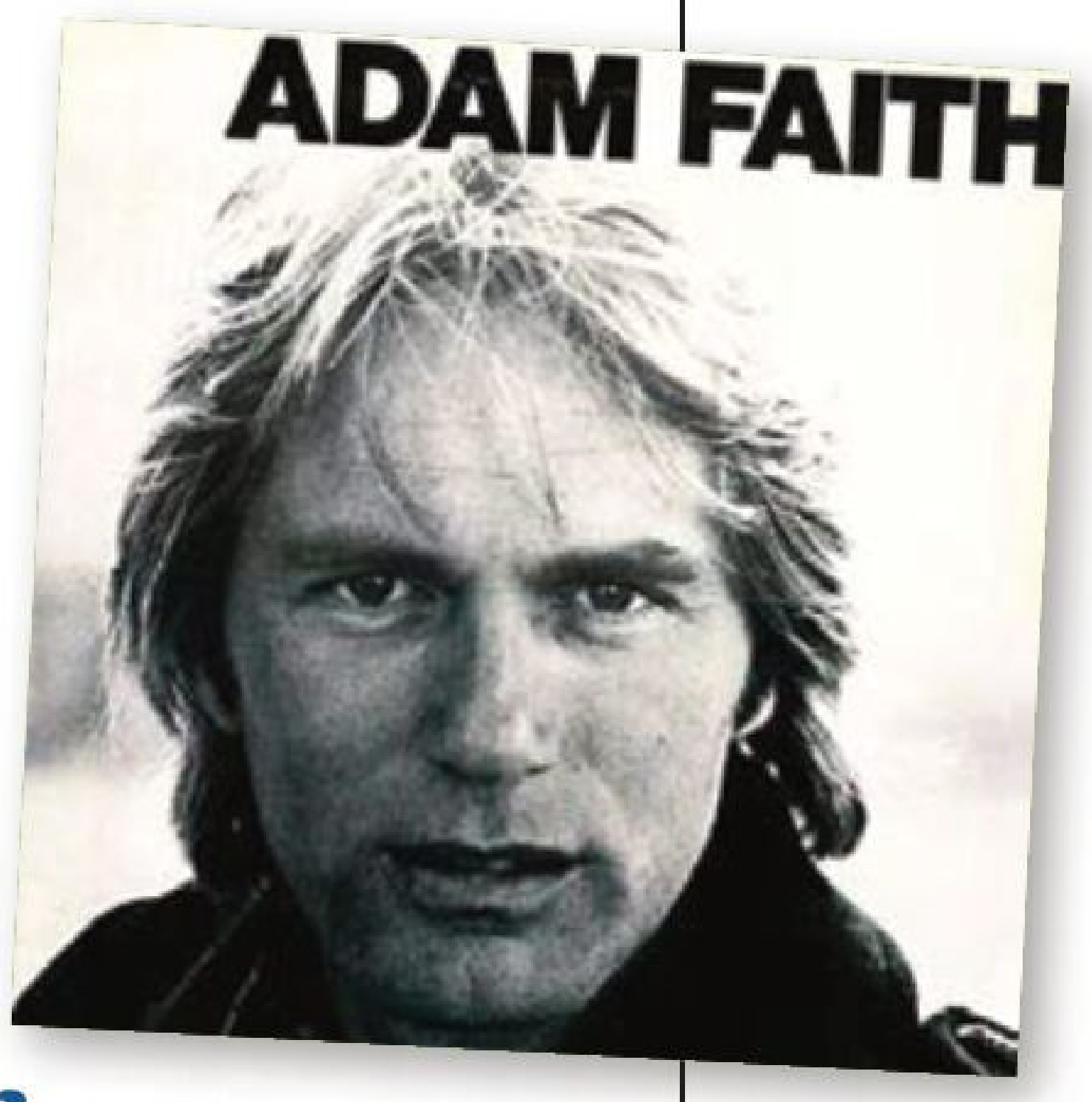
MARK BENTLEY

…AND ON CELERY, SIR PAUL McCARTNEY

Top 10 lesser-spotted magic Macca moments

1. Aiding Adam Faith's first comeback

Paul plays synthesiser on "Change", "Goodbye" & "Never Say Goodbye" on the *I Survive* LP (1974). Ritchie Blackmore's on it, too.



2. Being Paul Ramon for real

"My Dark Hour": Steve Miller Band, *Brave New World* (1969) – credited as his famous alias, Paul plays bass, drums and sings.

3. Scoring a film that you'd forgotten about

The Honorary Consul's main theme was written by Macca, and performed by John Williams (1983).

4. Abetting a lost psych gem

Check out "Rosetta" by Liverpool's The Fourmost, a non-album single from 1969 – that's Paul on piano. Find it on *Lovers From The Sky: Pop Psych Sounds From The Apple Era 1968–1971*.

5. Cooking up some louche lounge-jazz

Macca wrote and arranged "Let's Love" for Peggy Lee (1974).

6. Playing 'mouth sax'

That fine kazoo work on "You're Sixteen" by Ringo Starr (1973)? You know who…

7. Providing beats for a beat poet

Paul played maracas, drums, bass and guitar for Allen Ginsberg's masterpiece "The Ballad Of The Skeletons" (1996).

8. Eating greens

Paul famously munched celery for The Beach Boys' "Vegetables" (1967). But did you know he repeated the trick for Super Furry Animals' "Receptacle For The Respectable" (2001)?

9. On an out-of-print jazz album

Wings guitarist Laurence Juber's 1982 album *Standard Time* – which has never been reissued –features the full Wings cohort on "Maisie", with McCartney on bass.

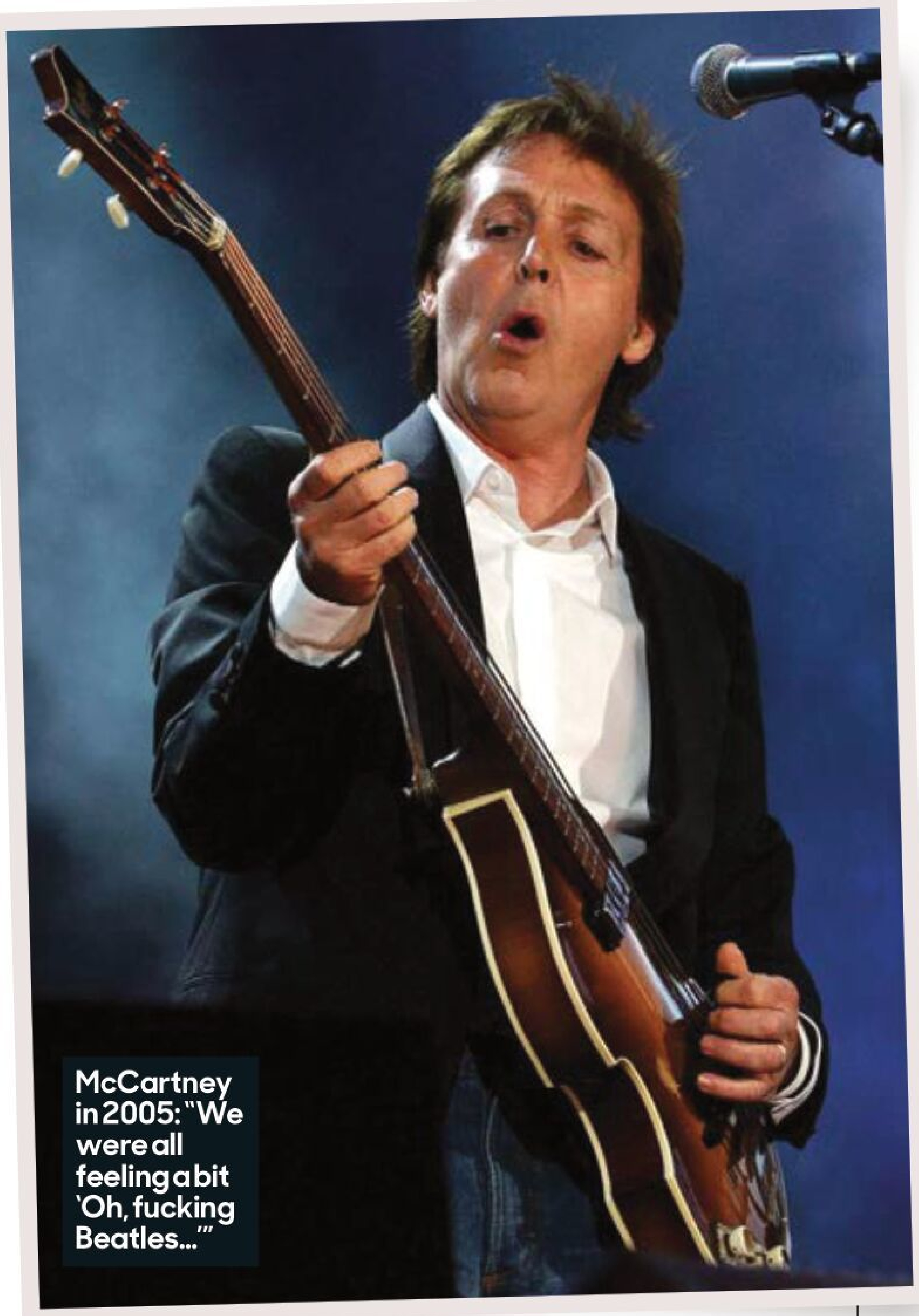
10. Helping out a mate, like

Paul contributes bass and backing vocals on "Hurt Myself" on touring guitarist Rusty Anderson's *Undressing Underwater* (2003).

HOWARD BARLOW/REDFERNS

STOP ME ...if you've heard this one before

Summer 2005: lost in the corridors of Abbey Road, Graeme Thomson encounters a familiar face. "All right, Graeme, can I help...?"



McCartney in 2005: "We were all feeling a bit 'Oh, fucking Beatles...'"

YUI MOK - PA IMAGES/PA IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

SHOES OFF, LONG legs stretched out, Paul McCartney is making full use of the sofa in the elevated control room of Abbey Road's Studio Two. Outside, a gaggle of tourists hang around like Apple Scruffs in training. Inside, George Martin is pottering around the canteen, the Fab Four's likenesses hang in every corridor, and the very walls of the studio secrete historical significance. It's all vaguely oppressive. "Yeah," grins McCartney, glancing around. "Get out of that, man!"

It's late summer 2005 and McCartney has just completed *Chaos And Creation In The Backyard*, a two-hander with Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich. The experience appears to have left him somewhat tenderised. Having bumped into Godrich earlier, I can see why. As McCartney's PR man raved about his 1980 album track "Temporary Secretary", Godrich interrupted to briskly dismiss the song as "dreadful, awful".

McCartney, it transpires, has had a bit of a rough ride on his 13th solo album. "I'd bring songs in and Nigel would say, 'No, I don't like that. It's a bit ordinary, can you think of a new tune for it?' 'Whaaaat?!!' One day he said something about a song we'd been doing. I'm not sure if he said, 'I think it's crap,' but it sounded like that to me, and we had a bit of a plunge into the darkness. I ended up saying, 'Look, I think I'll knock it on the head for today.'

"IF YOU'VE BEEN AROUND LONG ENOUGH AND HAD HITS, YOU PUT ON A FRONT"

"We came in the next day and talked. He said, 'Oh, I didn't think you'd take it like that.' I said, 'Come on, man. What do you think I am? I'm like you. If you knock my confidence then it's knocked.' If you've been around long enough and done well and had hits, you put on a face, a front. It's not necessarily the truth."

As the afternoon wears on, McCartney is persuaded to contemplate the twists and turns of a deceptively varied post-Beatles career. "I don't really see a thread running through it," he says. "I was just trying to make a path away from The Beatles. We were all feeling a bit 'Oh, fucking Beatles.' Some of the very early stuff now sounds sort of hippy, a little bit 'Glastonbury'. *McCartney* was a home-baked pie.

"I was plugged into the back of a Studer four-track, so it's very, very raw. It was great fun, very therapeutic and quite a brave, nutty thing to do, I suppose. *Ram* was echoing my lifestyle, going to Scotland with a new family and being very free. It was good to break out in other directions that I hadn't necessarily experimented with. It seemed like too soft an option to just do Beatles songs and get a big super band around me."

When he finally formed a band, McCartney experimented with democracy. "Coming out of The Beatles, I'd got burned by being told I was too overbearing, so I backed off too far in the early days of Wings. Having to be diplomatic and say 'Um, perhaps we should do this?' doesn't work. Eventually somebody says, 'Why don't you tell us what you want?' and I'd think, 'I just got a bollocking for doing that!' There was a bit of that in early Wings, which caused difficulties."

It's been a recurring theme, the difficulty in finding collaborators who won't wilt in the shadow of the McCartney legacy. After all, how can any writing partner follow John Lennon? "Well, he was certainly the best. Just a bit! We came through our evolution together, so we knew what each other was thinking."

I always got the sense your creative dialogue lasted as long as Lennon was alive. "Yes, I was very aware of that. I remember reading that when John heard 'Coming Up' he said, 'Oh, bastard McCartney. I've gotta write again!' It reminded him of the standards we both could reach. It's interesting that it was a little song like that, not particularly earth-shattering. It would happen to me, too. I'd hear something and go, 'Oh, here we go again.' It was a great thing, like a seesaw.

"Elvis [*Costello*] was good fun to work with. Very forthright! We would sit around for a few hours with acoustic guitars and scribble something down, kind of like John and I had done. It was cool, because we could go downstairs into the studio and immediately make raw demos – some of which are better than the finished records. They're hot off the stove and pretty cool. But I've had other collaborations when I've thought, 'This is just not working,' just because it wasn't that interesting." I ask for names. He smiles a refusal. "I don't want to say who, because it would be a put-down on the person. It's like telling out of school."

With that, he stretches, slips on his shoes, ruffles his suspiciously dark hair, and lopes off downstairs for some "veggie nosh".

Later, slightly lost in the labyrinth of Abbey Road, I bump into him again. "All right, Graeme?" he asks, "Can I help? I've been here a couple of times before so I think I know the way..."

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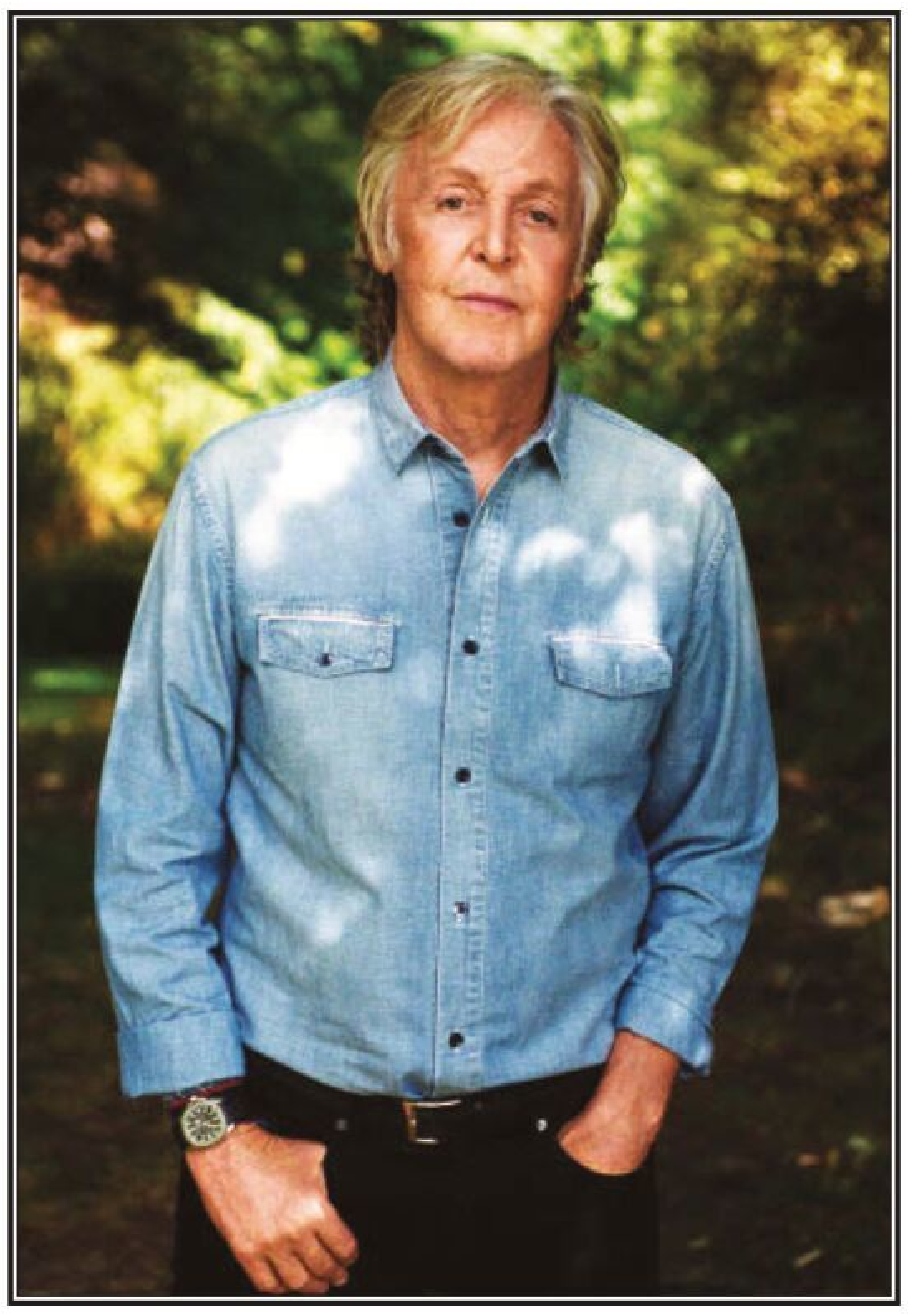
PAUL McCARTNEY

In the year of his 80th birthday and his 60th of professional recording, we celebrate the songwriting genius of Paul McCartney. From family life and the birth of Wings to the creative freedoms of *McCartney III* we trace Paul's solo musical journey. "*You gave me something I understand…*"



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Including…

"LET'S JUST SOD OFF TO SCOTLAND…"

Paul recalls his state of mind as The Beatles split and his solo career begins

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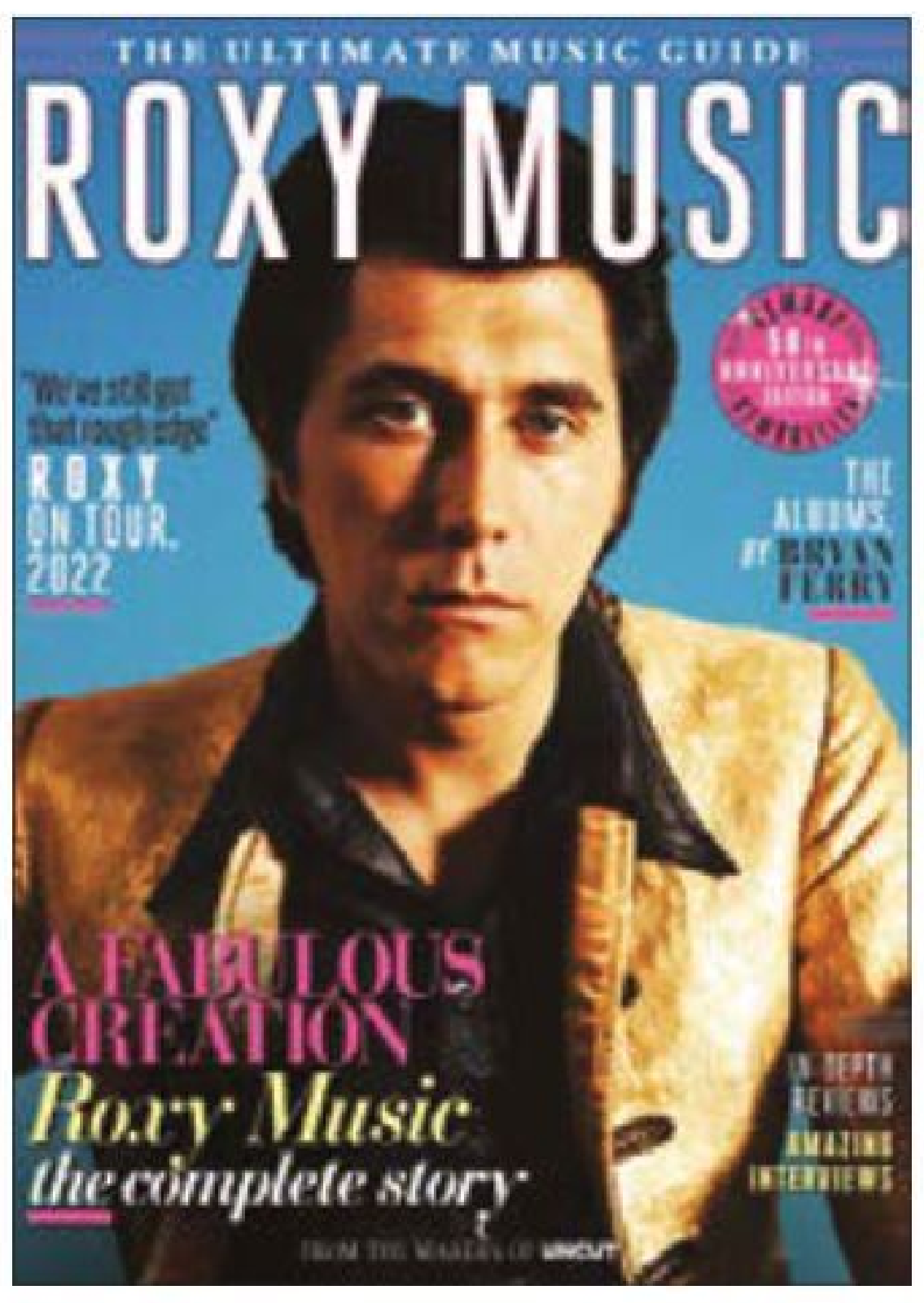
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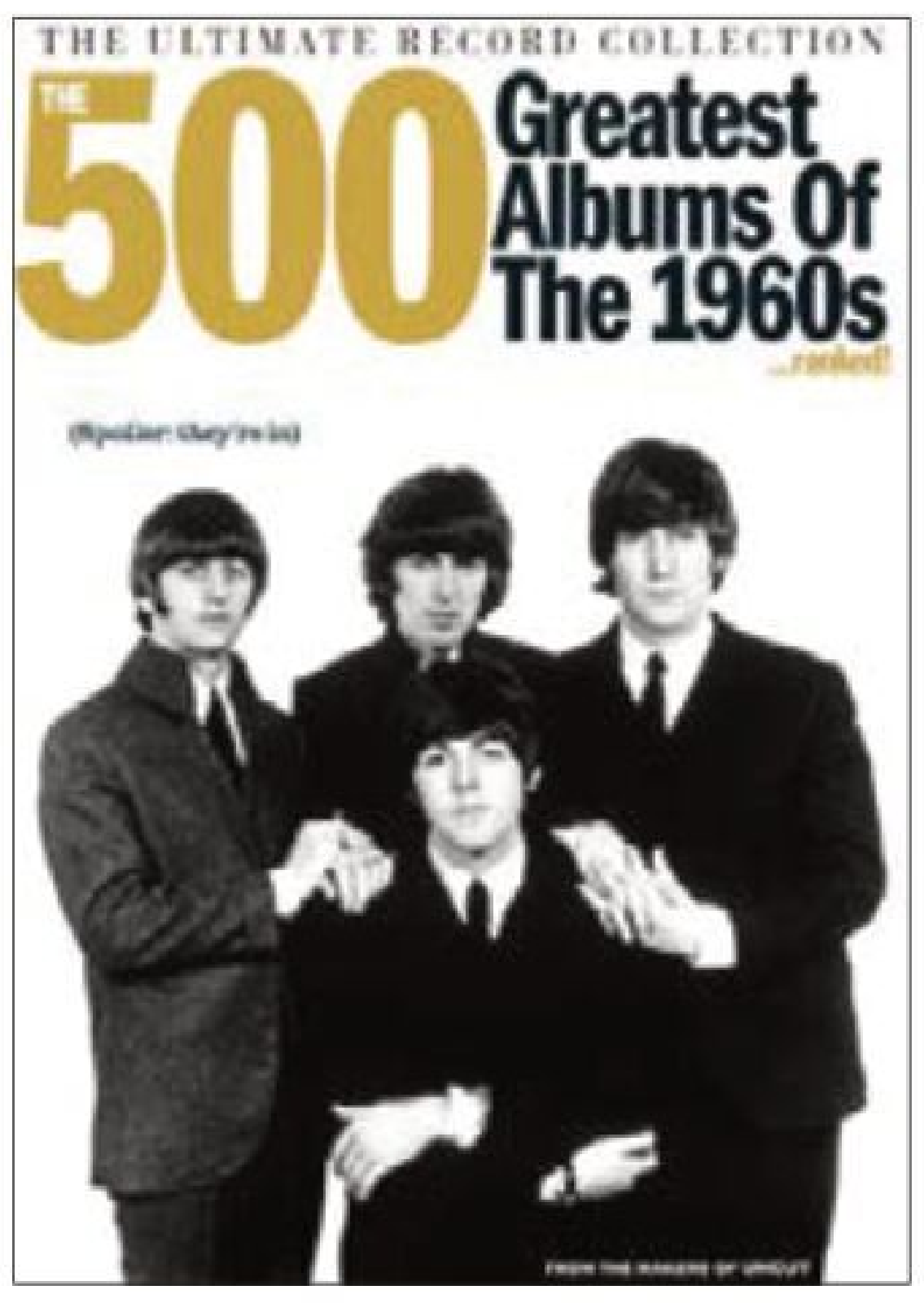
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